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Sinbad's
George Buza

Cerebus's pal
Dave Sim

William B. Davis

THE CANCER MAN

and the complete dossier on the Lone Gunmen

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PARSEC

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 3

**CHRIS KREJLGAARD**
*Publisher/Managing Editor*

**JOHN LAPPA**
*Production/Photography*

**DONNA KREJLGAARD**
*Advertising Co-ordinator*

**NORM MAYER**
*Italian property procurement*

***MEMBER***

Canadian Magazine Publishers Association

**REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS**

James Armstrong, Ellen Ashton-Haiste, Brian Belfry, W. Ritchie Benedict, Peter Bloch-Hansen, James G. Boutilier, Gregg Chamberlain, Suzanne Gaudin, Mici Gold, Janet L. Hetherington, Lars Johanson, JEL, Jon Mayall, Justin Mohareb, Jean-Pierre Normand, John Platt, Ronn Sutton, Emru Townsend, Stefan Valent, Greg Vaillancourt

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**Publisher's Notebook**

# Marking the passing of a legend

*Just as Parsec was going to press, an event took place that forced us to pull back the computer disks to make note of this event. I think you'll agree that this event merited the delay.*

It started with an email message from an acquaintance in Toronto.

"Judith Merril died of congestive heart failure on September 12, 1997, in Toronto. Thought you'd like to know."

In everyone's life, there are certain people that one would like to meet. It would be an opportunity to share an opinion or gain some insight or even just to chat for a moment or two.

Judith Merril was one of those people for me. Sadly, her death robs me of that opportunity.

Her passing means that I will never have the chance of hearing her retell how a vodka drinking contest led to her to becoming friends with and later wife to author Frederik Pohl, or of her time with fellow authors such as Pohl, James Blish and Issac Asimov or of even listening her address a gathering of speculative fiction fans. And I feel diminished by this reality.

Certainly, her death did not come as much of a surprise. She had been diagnosed with congestive heart disease recently, but her passing still packs a wallop for the science fiction community.

For many of us, Merril was the mother of Canadian speculative fiction (a term that, in this case, encompasses both science fiction and fantasy), in both body and spirit. Hell, she was there during the rebirth of science fiction in the 1940s - 1950s and knew all of the pioneers in the genre.

But in the past three decades, her name and Canadian speculative fiction have become synonymous.

She had been a successful author in her native United States. Her first published story, Only a Mother, in 1948. For the next 20 years, Merril continued to write and edit anthologies. But after witnessing the events outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Merril had decided to move to Canada.

In his remembrance of her, Robert Sawyer called her ". . .a catalyst, a great starter of things."

And she was.

In 1970, she founded the Merril Collection at the Toronto Public Library. Until recently, Merril maintained an office at the collection and offered suggestions and advice on acquisitions, according to Lorna Toolis, head of the collection

Until 1991, the collection was known as the Spaced Out Library. At that time, it was renamed the Merril Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy.

At last count, the collection totals about 26,000 books, 18,000 periodicals and 8,500 paperbacks.

Toolis knew Merril for 11 years and is perhaps the one who could best appreciate the true measure of Merril's contribution. "She wanted to make sure that the collection was available to kids and people off the street," explained Toolis.

In 1985, Merril edited the first of the Tesseracts anthologies. After that, the annual anthology has circulated among some of Canada's top speculative fiction authors. She was also one of the staunchest advocates of nurturing more women science fiction and fantasy authors.

It is clear from listening to and reading remembrances of Merril that she was a "throwback."

She spoke her mind and was sharp-tongued so that people were hard-pressed to get close to her. But it is equally true that those who managed to peel the thorns away were taken with the rose that lay beyond.

"She had no patience for fools," Toolis noted.

"You have no idea of the space Judith filled until you step back and realize she's gone."

There is talk of honoring her at the Prix Aurora Award ceremony on Nov. 2. But the real celebration of her life and accomplishments will come next year. Merril would have turned 75 on Jan. 21. She has left instructions for how to mark the occasion.

"She always said that Toronto in the winter was a grey, dull place filled with grey, dull people," Toolis said of her friend, adding that this was the reason Merril headed for Jamaica when winter set in. So she told us to rent a hall, hire a reggae band and invite some people."

With Merril's passing, Canadian speculative fiction has lost its standard bearer. It will be interesting to see who, if anyone, picks up the standard and pushes the genre forward.

*— Chris*

# *The file on the* CANCER MAN

**By**
**GREGG CHAMBERLAIN**

With all the woes faced by the tobacco industry during the past year, cigarette company executives must cringe every-time an X-File episode features William B.Davis.

Davis just grins at the suggestion.

"Could be," he said with a quiet voice. "The only thing that's ever hit me directly is when I got a letter of complaint from a smokers' rights group complaining I was portraying smoking in a bad light."

He thought for a moment.

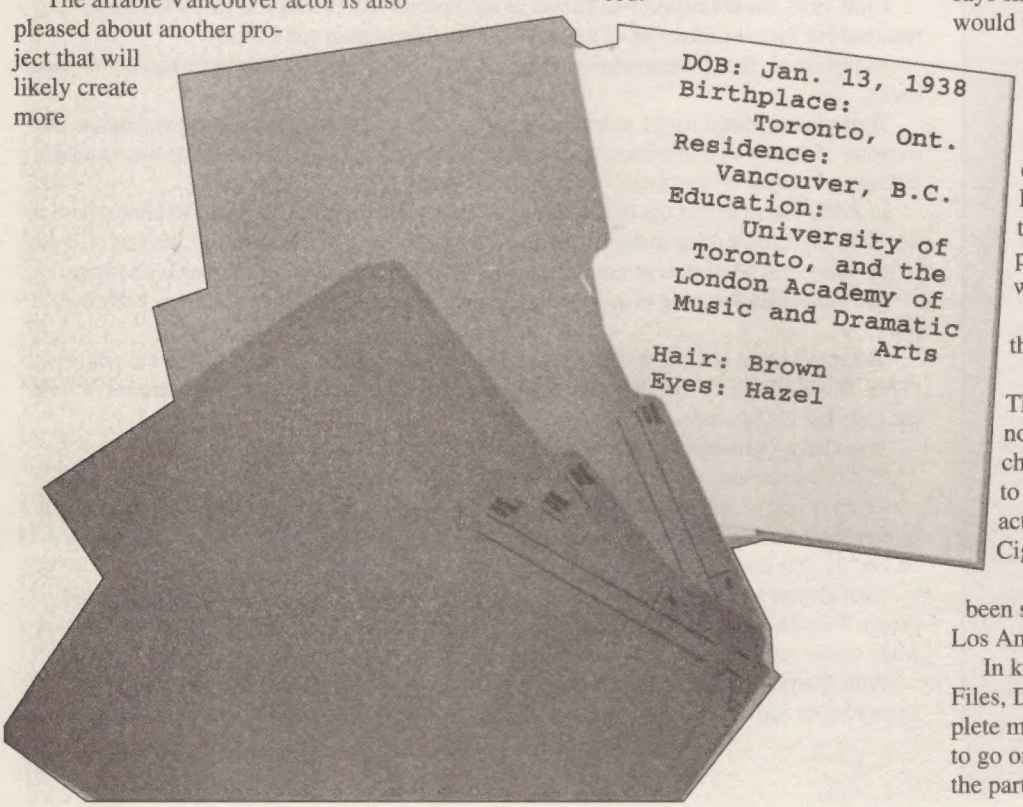
"I'm pleased about that."

The affable Vancouver actor is also pleased about another project that will likely create more headaches for the people who make their living selling cigarettes.

Davis has agreed to work with the Canadian Cancer Society on promotions aimed at making the public more aware of the dangers of tobacco use.

Since taking part in a spring fund-raiser for the society, Davis is awaiting word on the next public-relations project that will need help from the "Cancer Man."

Davis enjoys the irony of being the new arch-enemy of the tobacco industry, especially since he is an ex-smoker himself. During on-camera appearances, he puffs on a non-nicotine herbal cigarette which he compares to the taste of burning seaweed.




Soft-spoken and with a pleasant smile, in person Davis is nothing like his sinister Cigarette Smoking Man persona. He remarked on his good fortune in landing the role in the first place when he auditioned for a part in the pilot episode.

"I was actually reading for (the part of) a senior agent," he recalls.

Davis doesn't remember there being an auction call for the Cigarette Smoking Man role itself. He was after one of the few speaking roles available in the scenes where senior government officials are interviewing Dana Scully about her new partnership with Fox Mulder.

"I got the part with no lines," Davis says smiling. "I had no idea how the role would turn out."

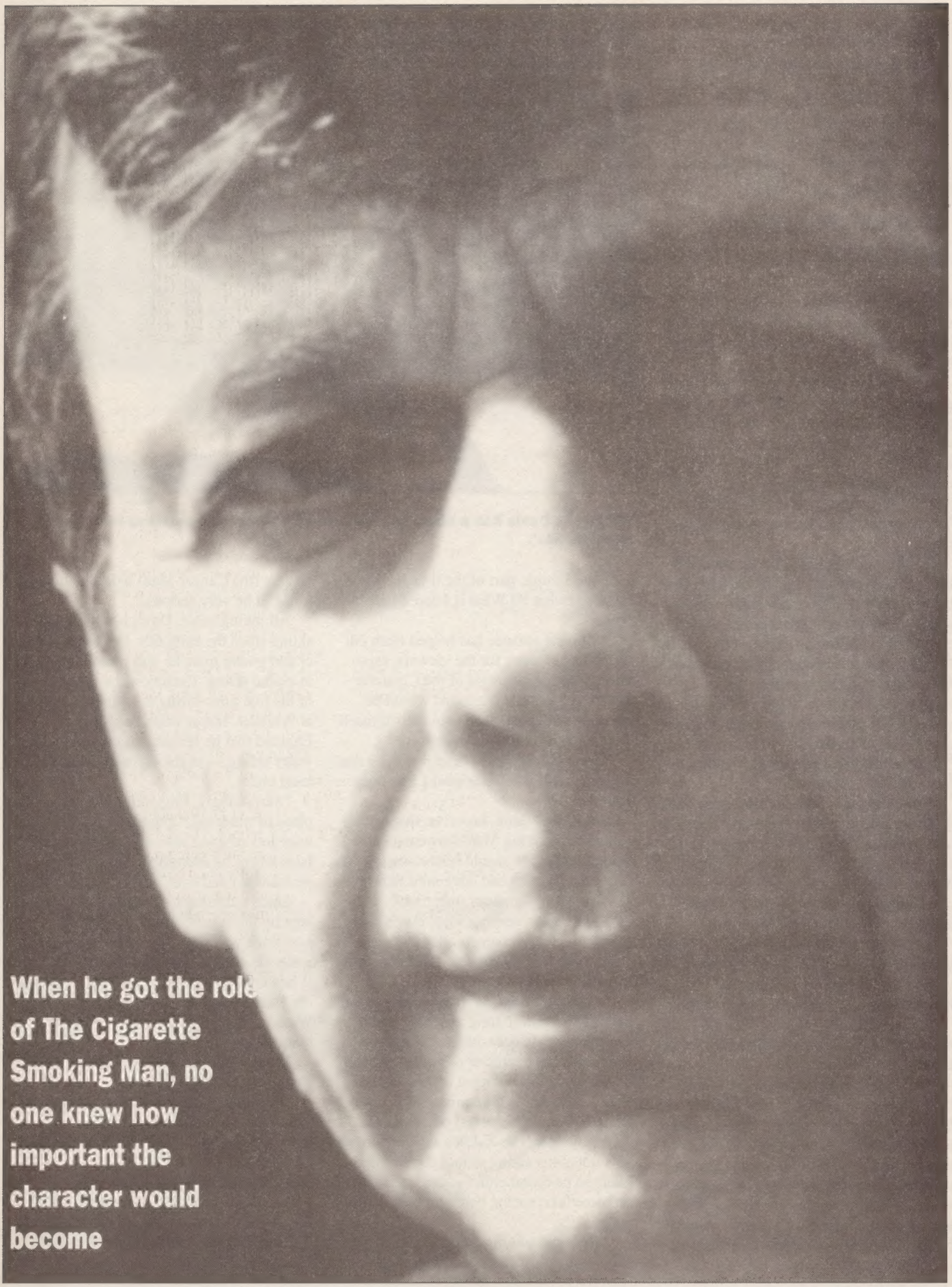
At the time, he was working as a freelance actor and was looking after his Vancouver-based acting school. The X-Files was just another show being produced on spec in Hollywood North with no guarantees that it would survive past its pilot episode in the networks' rating wars.

"It was an interesting role, even though the character had no lines."

Davis counts his blessings that The X-Files not only took off but that no one suspected at the time that his character would become so important to the show, otherwise an American actor might have ended up as the Cigarette smoking Man.

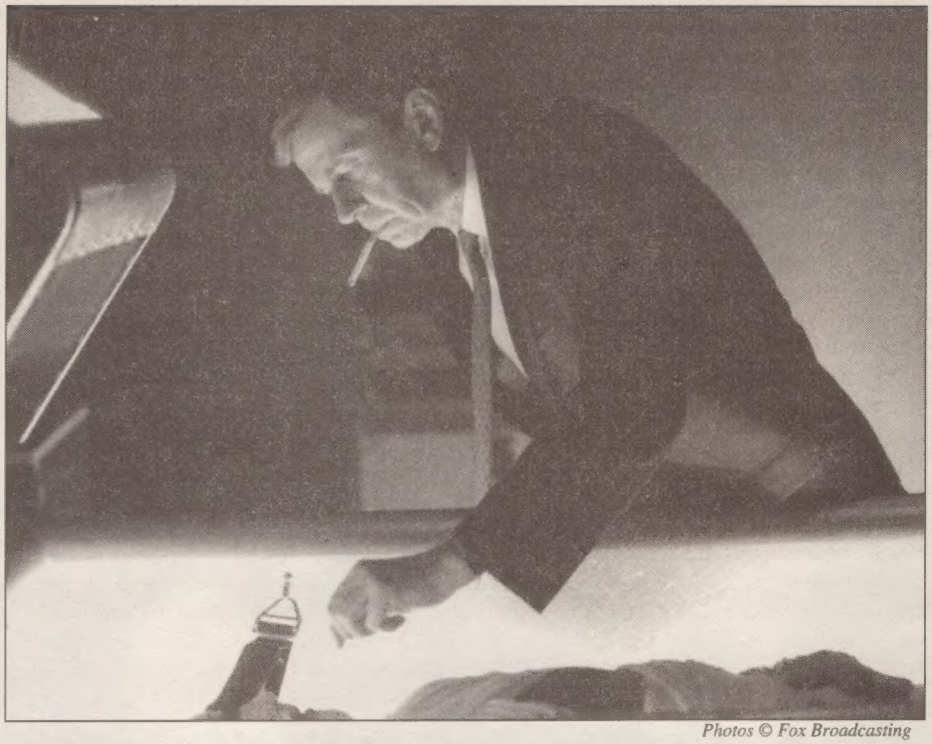
"If they had realized it would have been so big, they might have cast it in Los Angeles."

In keeping with the tradition of The X-Files, Davis's character remains a complete mystery — even to him. He had little to go on when he was first presented with the part and even after four seasons the



When he got the role of The Cigarette Smoking Man, no one knew how important the character would become

For me, it's been quite manageable. I can't imagine what it's like for David and Gillian. It hasn't impeded my life. People have been quite nice.



*Photos © Fox Broadcasting*

**William B. Davis has a short answer when he asks if he believes in extraterrestrials 'No'.**

true origins and motives of the chain-smoking mystery man remain hidden within the clouds of smoke from his trademark Morley cigarettes.

"This show's never had a bible," Davis explains. "So there's never been a character description other than a line or two. As we've gone on, done different episodes, each writer and director fleshes out things more, adds to the mythology, and they're not always consistent with one another. The character has been a constant evolution."

A form lurking in the background during the pilot episode, the Cancer Man has become almost the personification of the shadowy global cabal conspiring to hide evidence and information about the possible existence of extraterrestrials and their infiltration of Earth's society. Davis observes that there is "a good deal more chemistry" to his character, both emotionally and psychologically, in the sense of "what he is about and why he's about it and what he's sacrificed for it."

From the perspective of the series background and continuity, Davis says, both he and X-Philes have more information now than ever before about what the Cancer Man is involved in or may be involved in.

"Though it's always suspect in this show," Davis cautioned with a smile.

He is doubtful about a lot of the alleged background information revealed about his character in the landmark episode, Confessions of a Cigarette Smoking Man.

"I take most of that to be Frohike's wild imagings rather than serious information on the character."

His own feeling is that, at the same time Frohike was telling agent Mulder and Scully what his investigation had revealed about the Cancer Man's past and involvement in various conspiracies and government black operations, Davis's character was listening in on his surveillance system and amusing himself with mental visions based on the Lone Gunmen member's speculations.

"And I think, part of the time, he's imaging 'what if? What if I had all that power?' "

While the episode has helped flesh out the character more for the viewers, especially with the portrayal of the Cigarette Smoking Man as a frustrated would-be adventure novelist, Davis wonders himself how much of it may be true or not.

"I don't know if I believe that even that aspect is real. We'll see what Chris does with that."

Davis does think, however, that if the Cigarette Smoking Man does dream about being a writer, he would not be wasting his time churning out bad adventure fiction.

"I think he's smarter than that."

Along with everyone else, Davis does wonder what his character does when he's on his own and not involved in a conspiracy-related work.

"Any other time we've seen him alone, he doesn't seem to have anything to do." Davis has made occasional suggestions about how the character might act in a particular situation, but most of the Cancer Man's behavior is determined by creator Chris Carter or the series' other writers.

Away from The X-Files set, and when he's not at his acting school, Davis is most likely to be found either at the seaside or on some lake, racing behind a boat on his water skiis.

"They still tell me I'm going to water ski in one episode," he said laughing. "I'm sure he (the Cancer Man) won't be having fun. It'll be very serious."

All joking aside, Davis has been water skiing since the early 60s. But as a teenager and young man, he was more involved in alpine skiing. Even now, he spends a lot of his free time during the winter months at Whistler. It was when he was in England that he became more involved in water skiing — to the point of joining two local clubs.

"Surprisingly, England was a real good place to water ski," Davis recalls that there were lots of good sites around the British Isles where he and others gathered for recreational and competitive water skiing.

Since returning to Canada, Davis has kept up his aquatic interests and, for the past three years, has been the national water ski champion in his age group. When competing during the cooler parts of the year or at his summer cottage in Washington state, Davis sports a solid black wetsuit and cap.

People think it's quite appropriate to the character," he said with a grin.

Unlike David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson, Davis hasn't had any real problems with the fame that comes with being on The X-Files.

"It's been OK so far.

"A whole period of time will go by and no one may recognize me. Of course, believe it or not, there are lots of people who don't watch the show."

Beyond articles in People magazine and the Globe tabloid on his water skiing activities, he hasn't been much of a target for media interest.

"For me, it's been quite manageable. I can't imagine what it's like for David and Gillian. It hasn't impeded my life. People have been quite nice.

While a semi-regular on the series, Davis has also appeared in other science fiction/fantasy programs being produced in Vancouver.

In the Outer Limits episode, Out of Body, he portrayed a religious fundamentalist opposed to a scientist's research of out-of-body experiences . He had a minor role in the episode of Poltergeist: The Legacy, Do Not Go Gently. He played Dr. Bill Nagel, a friend of Legacy member Dr. Rachel Corrigan whom she consults during an investigation into demonic doings at a metropolitan hospital. Dr. Nagel was a genial sort — the kind of nice guy role Davis was well-known for before The X-Files came along.

"I'd like to do more of those. I used to do lots of nice parts, kindly fathers, etcetera. But now I'm seen as this evil guy. It's not actually typecasting since I'm not that type. It's more copycat casting.

"Not that I don't want to do villains anymore. But I would like to bring other aspects of my personality into play."

Not that I don't want to do villains anymore. But I would like to bring other aspects of my personality into play

He continues to audition for parts in other projects and would like to do more directing these days. He also has some "ill-formed" ideas about writing — not fiction or screenplays, but rather essays in a philosophical vein.

As an actor he finds it difficult to say what drives him the most. The challenge in every role is "to live truthfully in those imagined circumstances." For Davis, the whole field of acting, whether as a performer, a teacher or a director "is a way of exploring humans — how we live, why we do what we do — constantly trying to figure out why we are what we are."

But what does Davis feel drives the Cigarette Smoking Man?

"He probably didn't realize the sacrifices, the ruthlessness, that would be required."

Over the years, Davis suggests, that the idealistic young man has become a hollow shell of himself although he still pursues his original goal, sacrificing any hope of a normal life for the dream of a better world.

"It's more like a person at war. He may have a mental picture of what it may be like when the war is won, but there's no guarantee of peace. I don't think he's at all convinced that it will give him pleasure."

The Cancer Man may achieve power as his reward, but there may be no real pleasure for him in that peace of which he dreams. Davis remarks that in one episode his character said that few leaders are willing to take the pain upon themselves, which may be an indication that the character is developing a martyr complex.

Davis chuckled and said that perhaps his character will one day decide to chuck it all.

"Maybe he'll pull the plug on the whole thing."

Concerning the overall premise of the show, Davis has two answers about whether he believes or wonders about the likelihood that alien races have ever been to or are now on Earth.

"The short answer is 'no'," he says, adding the long answer relates back to his own feeling about the need for himself, through the medium of acting, to continue searching for the truth.

The final answer for Davis is still unknown. Which prompted one final cautionary observation from the veteran actor.

"I realize that The X-Files is a rattling good story. But it worries me sometimes if people think we're giving them secret information about what's going on.

"But one of the things I think it captures is we're going into an age of real uncertainty with the switch from print to electronic media and electronic records, because our data now is so ephemeral.

"As a society, we're becoming very insecure, almost paranoid. The X-Files captures that very well and I think that's where its truth lies.

"Not in the paranormal but in the (feelings of) uncertainty."

☆

## File Excerpts

**When he's not lurking in the shadows in his X-Files persona or trying some new water skiing stunts, William B. Davis can be found at the Vancouver acting school he founded in 1989, helping would-be thespians get their stage legs.**

**Davis began as a child actor in early Canadian radio drama. During his years of study and practice in England, he served as director for several repertory theatres as well as working at the National Theatre. Back in Canada during the late '60s he appeared on stage, T.V. and film before accepting an offer to manage the Vancouver Playhouse Acting School.**

**Davis's own philosophy regarding acting and the teaching of the craft stems from his concept of using the medium as a way to search for the truth about the human condition.**

**"The atmosphere has to be very positive which is often not the case in many acting schools." He noted that some acting teachers in North America seem to feel that the best way to teach is by tearing down their students through steady criticism. Davis, with his background in the English theatre tradition, disagrees. "You're asking the talent to grow. Thus it has to be nurtured. It can't be pushed or shoved."**

# The Conspiracy Specialists

## Are the trio really who they say they are? Are they really paranoid? How close to real life are Langly, Frohicke and Beyers? And how did the three end up on skates?

By GREGG CHAMBERLAIN

They are probably the most famous trio of Vancouver actors. So why doesn't anyone seem to recognize Dean Haglund, Bruce Harwood or Tom Braidwood when they're not on the X-Files set in their personae of Langly, Byers or Frohicke?

"People don't really recognize me in Vancouver," mused Harwood. "Even people who watch the show a lot don't recognize me."

He conceded that viewers who are real X-Philes might be able to spot him on the street, however there are people who know him on a personal basis but don't realize that he plays Byers.

"I were glasses in real life and he doesn't," Harwood explained.

Of the three Lone Gunmen, he is the one people are most likely to encounter away from the X-Files set since he works part-time as a city librarian. Because he is on-call, Harwood can be found at any one of the branches of the Vancouver Public Library.

While Byers (er . . . Harwood) has to take his glasses off to help people recognize his X-Files alter ego, Langly (er . . . Haglund) has to put on a pair of spectacles. It's a reality that does make for some interesting moments on stage during his stints as a stand-up comedian. Of course, he has to wait for the audience to recognize him.

"I don't were those glasses in real life. It takes people a good five minutes for them to go, 'Oh, yeah, him'," he laugh. "The 'Clark Kent' routine actually works. I always used to think Lois was pretty stupid not to catch on."

Braidwood, on the other hand, spends most of his time on the X-Files' sets, but he's usually behind the camera.

His main job with Ten Thirteen Productions at its North Vancouver facilities is as one of the two first assistant directors on the series. His duties include organizing the elements involved in the shooting of an episode (props, special effects, actors and locations), as well as addressing the needs of the episode's director and various department heads. In addition, he's called upon to trouble-shoot any problems that come up from time to time.

"And then basically organize the episode schedule and go shoot it," he explained. "We have eight days to prepare a show and eight days to shoot it."

The trio's first appearance as the Lone Gunmen was in E.B.E. early in the series' first season. At the time, neither Haglund, Harwood nor Braidwood ever expected their roles to be anything more than a one-shot deal.

"Apparently, the reaction on the Internet was the deciding factor," Haglund said about the decision to make the Lone Gunmen recurring characters. The decision was made when James Wong and Glen Morgan were with the series — before they left to develop Space: Above and Beyond for Fox Broadcasting. Wong and Morgan were the first X-Files writers to gauge public reaction to the series from comments on the Net.

Viewer response to the Lone Gunmen prompted Wong and Morgan to bring the three back for another episode . . . and then another . . . and another.

Braidwood noted that, when they were first conceived the Lone Gunmen were just a storytelling device to help Fox Mulder in a particular situation when he needed some information.

"The characters definitely hit some kind of nerve with a portion of the viewing audience."

Braidwood, himself, only realized just how popular the characters were with fans after his children brought home some examples of X-Files merchandise. "It finally got through when I showed up on a trading card," he chuckled.

Harwood still isn't certain why his character and the other two members of the Lone Gunmen have become so important to X-Philes.

"I think maybe it was because we were a ray of comedy in a show that was primarily dark and moody."

Even after a decision was made to bring the characters back for a return appearance, Haglund did not have a real sense of being a permanent part of the series until after they had appeared in three or four episodes.

Since E.B.E., the trio have been, together and separate, in about a dozen episodes. But there are no indication just how long they will remain part of the series.

"Chris Carter has got a sort of out line for the series for five years. But not all the scripts have been written," Haglund said.

One benefit of having the characters return to the show, Braidwood believes, is that they have helped broaden Mulder's world.

"In the sense that Mulder is not completely on his own with his suspicions. In a certain way, we are working outside of the system and suspect the system," he said of an aspect of their character that has struck a chord with X-Files fans.

"We're the purveyors of the THEY theory. THEY did it. THEY are behind it."

Are the three characters really as paranoid as they appear during their appearances on the series? Are Langley, Byers and Frohicke even their real names?

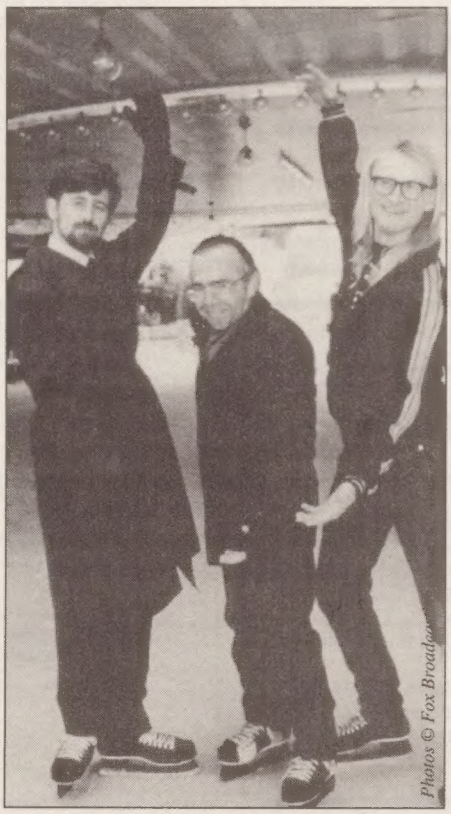
"I assume it is his real name," Harwood replies. "Byers would be a pretty dull pseudonym. And, yes, he really is."

"Why are you asking me that?" Haglund demands in mock suspicion.

"That's a good question. I tend to think he is. I think we address each other by our last names. There've been many speculations."

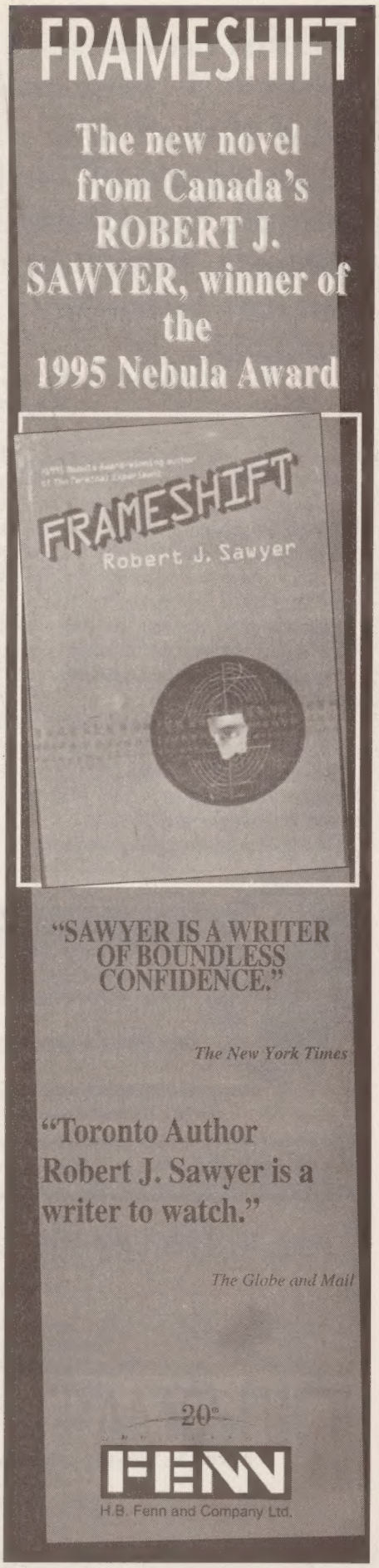
Haglund speculated that the name of his

"Chris Carter has got a sort of out line for the series for five years. But not all the scripts have been written."



Photos © Fox Broadcasting

**In Piper Maru, the Lone Gunmen demonstrated their skating skills as they helped Fox Mulder try to recover a digital information tape by using a bait-and-switch technique. According to Bruce Harwood, it was an instance that shows the trio coming out of their shells and taking an active role in battling the unseen forces of the Establishment.**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"I think he's pretty paranoid. I think he's a bit of a loner. The Gunmen are his best friends. They share his paranoia. They find comfort in their paranoia."

— Tom Braidwood

character could have been partly inspired by the Langley Air Force Base in Virginia or by Langley City, B.C., which is about a 10-minute drive from the X-Files stomping grounds in the Vancouver area.

A better guess, however, is that his character's name is an oblique reference to Langley, Va., the headquarters for the Central Intelligence Agency.

As for the group paranoia, Haglund noted that in the Lone Gunmen's first episode, they taped Mulder's phone call.

"Is it paranoia? Is it just healthy distrust? I think it depends on the work you're doing."

Even though he doesn't know Frohicke's first name, Braidwood is sure about his character's place in the scheme of things.

"I think he's pretty paranoid. I think he's a bit of a loner. The Gunmen are his best friends. They share his paranoia. They find comfort in their paranoia," he said.

Harwood suggested another reason for the trio's ultra-suspicious nature.

"I think all three of them are driven by the same thing that drives Scully and Mulder," he mused. "The quest for truth. It may not be as high-minded though."

He suggested the characters are trying to shield themselves with all the bits of information they collect rather than use their knowledge as a weapon against the establishment — though that may change with future appearances of the Lone Gunmen.

"I think they're slowly coming out of their shells," Harwood said, noting that in the episode, Piper Maru, the trio took an active role in helping Mulder attempt to recover a digital information tape by doing a bat-an-switch routine at a skating rink.

"I think they all admire (Dana) Scully and Mulder very much. The chance to playact as FBI agents was really neat."

However, he pointed out that there are limits to just how active a role Langly, Byers and Frohicke will play. They are still a very sheltered group. In Anasazi, this was illustrated when their fellow conspiracy theorist, The Thinker, uncovered an encrypted government information about secret genetic experiments, UFO conspiracies and the evidence that proved everything was buried in the Arizona desert.

"The one time they were in real danger," Harwood observed.


DESIGN SOUND PRODUCTIONS
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> "Is it paranoia? Is it just healthy distrust? I think it depends on the work you're doing."
>
> — Dean Haglund

"They came running to Mulder."

After portraying Byers, Langly and Frohicke for so long, the three actors have firm ideas about the Gunmen's motivations and aspirations.

"Byers is quiet, solitary, not a lot of close friends," Harwood observed. "He's married. I haven't decided what his wife does yet but whatever it is, it's her income that supports the both of them.

"I assumed by the way he dressed, his demeanor and his computer knowledge that he was a professor, but I've changed my mind," he said. "He's not as smart as I thought he was. He's a computer geek."

Harwood now thinks that Byers may have a part-time job, perhaps as a representative for a photocopying supply firm. Of course, this is all speculation on his part. The three actors didn't receive much in the way of background material when they were selected for the roles in E.B.E.

"As it was written, they're just three guys in this room. They have no life outside of that," Harwood said, adding that he believes Byers' greatest fear is that someday he's proven wrong about all of his conspiracy beliefs. From his first appearance, Byers has projected a satisfied belief in his own knowledge that conspiracies do exist.

"Luckily he lives in the X-Files world where conspiracies are true. If he lived in another series, he'd be in real trouble."

On the other hand, Haglund believes Langly is pretty much an average person.

"I definitely do not see him as weird or unusual. I see him as a regular guy with above-average intelligence. I would not describe him as super-paranoid freaky. I would describe him as someone who likes to get things done outside of the normal modes."

Haglund figures Langly has been involved with the Lone Gunmen for seven or eight years and, if he has a favorite conspiracy theory it is something like Bon Jovi really being a group of aliens.

"I don't think he trusts anybody. For instance, if Mulder really wanted to get at the truth, why is he still with the FBI?"

Braidwood says he's thought a lot about what Frohicke is like since he first stepped out from behind the cameras.

"I've always thought he fixes motorcycles. Big bikes which he can't really handle, but he likes them."

*Photo courtesy of Dean Haglund*

**Actor Dean Haglund figures his character's favorite conspiracy theory involves Bon Jovi and a group of extra-terrestrials.**

Horsepower that he can't ride almost seems to fit in with the would-be knight-errant aspect of Frohicke.

"He and the Gunmen believe they're contributing to a better world," Braidwood explains. "He's interested in a just society, but he is a bit of a victim of his own paranoia, rightly or wrongly."

## Channel on the way

Space: the Imagination Station has announced it will hit the airways on Oct. 17 at 5:30 p.m.

The station will feature past episodes of the X-Files, as well as vintage science fiction programs such as Lost in Space, Star Trek, Dr. Who and Space Precinct.

The channel will also include original programming such as Spin which will offer science and science-fiction related news items.


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> **They have no practical experience in real field work the way Mulder's been trained. That's where they fall down."**
>
> – Bruce Harwood

One could speculate that the Lone Gunmen are Sigmund Freud's theory of the three parts of the mind personified with Frohicke as the emotional, passionate Id; Byers as the distant, dispassionate Superego; and Langly performing the balancing act as the Ego.

"I like that description," Harwood said. "Byers is the leader of a group and is responsible for organizing the other two."

But Harwood concedes that the term "leader" may not be how the other two members of the Lone Gunmen see Byers.

"They trust each other very much. It's not so much I'm the leader as I'm the figurehead. We move on as one even though we are three. "We're extensions of each other."

Haglund found the Freudian suggestion interesting, especially the idea of Langly being the "ego bridge" between the buttoned-up Byers and the seedy-looking Frohicke.

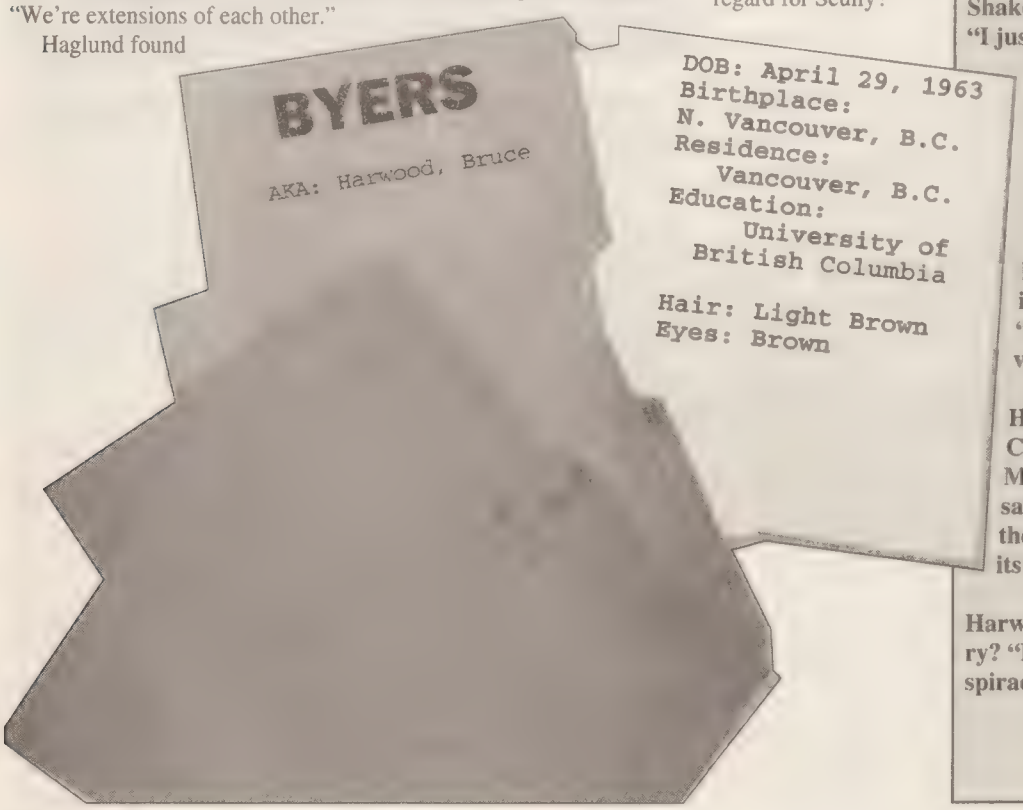
"I would sort of agree with that, bringing the two worlds together." Haglund stressed that he does not see, however, Langly being the leader of the trio the way a psychiatrist might see the ego as the lead part of a person's psyche.

"The three of them work together."

Braidwood said the concept of the Lone Gunmen as psychological incarnations was "not a bad idea.

"Frohicke's the hardware element of the crew," he said of the character's knowledge of military hardware.

And what of Frohicke's passionate regard for Scully?




## File Excerpts

**After university, Bruce Harwood worked in amateur theatre before getting his first professional gig.**

**Over the years he has had roles in a variety of movies, local theatre productions and in various British Columbia-based series such as The Beachcombers and MacGyver. Earlier this year, Harwood starred in the Vancouver Fringe Festivals production of Will and Anne — a play about the married life of William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway. "I just pretended it wasn't Shakespeare. It did scare me, but I decided to play it not as Shakespeare but as a guy who wanted to write plays."**

**Harwood was specifically asked to read for the role of Byers. Many of his previous roles involved bookish characters. "My wife says I look like a university professor."**

**He modelled Byers after Noam Chomsky, ". . . with all respect to Mr. Chomsky, as that kind of crusading university professor, but the character has evolved beyond its original persona."**

**Harwood's favorite conspiracy theory? "I believe in stupidity over conspiracy."**

"At first, I think he was quite smitten by Scully," Braidwood remarked. "One reason is because she is attractive and second because she is very intelligent. Two very powerful facts."

He noted the relationship has developed into a true friendship. And that with the increased familiarity, the lust aspect has faded.

"Also Gillian and I, on a real level, have become good, professional friends," Braidwood said.

While background information on the Lone Gunmen has been sketchy, if not non-existent, Haglund suggested the trio may have met and become familiar, if not friends, with each other while attending university.

Certainly, one of the connecting links between the three men, other than a paranoid belief in government conspiracies and their skating talents, is their computer expertise.

Harwood said that Byers' primary skill in that area seems to be an almost amazing ability to ferret out obscure information from unlikely sources on the Internet and from encrypted databases.

"I think of him as the archivist of the group."

Harwood suggested that Frohicke and Langly perform the legwork and the dirty work as needed. Whenever they're with Mulder, Byers is the member of the Lone Gunmen who talks the most about information technology, his familiarity demonstrated by the use of technical jargon or the latest buzzwords.

"I've had to look up at least one or two words for every scene," he notes.

Haglund added that during past episodes of the X-Files, Langly has dropped hints that indicates he has knowledge of image enhancement technology and molecular biology. But his main area of expertise centres on computers and electronic surveillance.

"Which is why I (Langly) am paranoid about having my image bounced off a satellite," Haglund explains.

Yet, as a scene in Piper Maru demonstrated, the Lone Gunmen's fascination with technology blinds them to rather obvious solutions.

In the episode, an envelope which once contained the digital information tape has faint impressions on its surface. Langly, Byers and Frohicke discuss laser and electrostatic techniques which might be able to read the impressions.

While they are talking, Mulder takes a sheet of paper and a pencil and makes a rubbing of the impressions, thereby revealing an unlisted phone number.

"No don't drop that," Mulder says as he hands Frohicke the pencil. "That's a finely-calibrated piece of investigative equipment."

The trio are surprised by a method any detective — television or otherwise — knows and which has been around since Sherlock Holmes. But it demonstrates that sometimes the Lone Gunmen can't see the world forest for the techno trees.

"That's exactly how I'd put it," Braidwood said. "Rather than look for simplicity, they look for complexity."

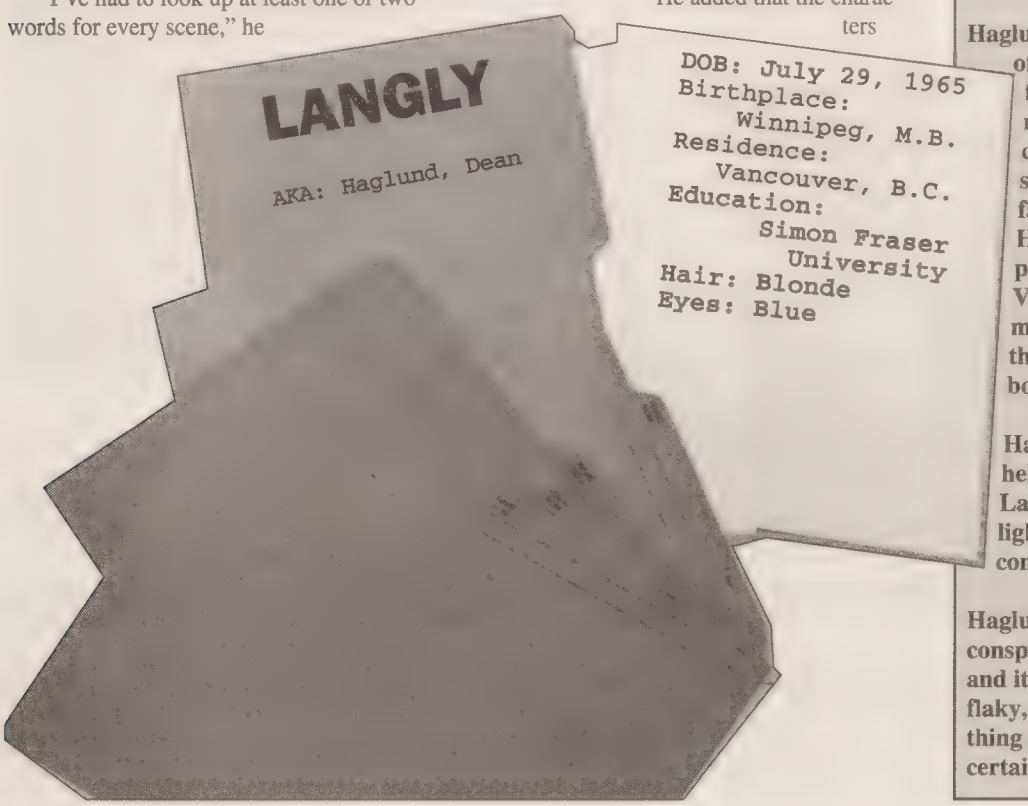
He added that the characters risk becoming victims of their own conspiracy theories.

"They have no practical experience in real field work the way Mulder's been trained," Harwood observed. "That's where they fall down."

How likely are the Lone Gunmen ever to get more of that practical field experience? Braidwood thinks the chances are pretty good that future appearances for the trio will see them taking a more active part in Mulder's and Scully's investigations.

"We (as actors) push more for getting in the field with Mulder." So far, he adds, X-Files creator Carter and the series' writers seem agreeable to the idea.

"I think they went for it," Braidwood said. "We ended up in the skating rink." ☆




## File Excerpts

**Dean Haglund had not heard about The X-Files when his agent called in 1993 to tell him there was a part he should audition for in a (then) new series being shot in the Vancouver area.**

**At first, Haglund wasn't told which role he might be trying out for, though he was told he might be reading for a character called "Frohicke." Most of the audition consisted of Haglund pretending to talk to someone on the phone.**

**Haglund modelled his interpretation of Langly after some computer friends who are also fans of rock music. The paranoid side of the character was picked up from some other friends and their favorite conspiracy theories. Haglund observed that many people he knows who were part of Vancouver's early Internet community believed that "they were the new rebels undermining the boundaries of society."**

**Haglund's background in comedy helped shape the character of Langly. "It's allowed me to bring a lighter feel. On paper, he always comes across as pretty heavy."**

**Haglund has his own thoughts about conspiracies. "I've said this before, and it always comes out sounding flaky, but I think truth is a subjective thing so it's ALL true, but just for certain people."**

# On an upwards slide

## Jerry O'Connell has found new worlds to conquer — in front of the camera and behind it

*Photos courtesy Fox Broadcasting*

**Jerry O'Connell has mirrored the growth of his character, Quinn Mallory, during the course of Sliders. Last season, he made the jump to the director's chair for the episode, Stoker.**

**By GREGG CHAMBERLAIN**

Jerry O'Connell is as high as a science fiction fan who just got invited to William Gibson's house for dinner and a bit of Internet surfing and he wants everyone to know it.

"He's got good reason to be pleased. At age 11, O'Connell starred in Stand By Me, director Rob Reiner's film adaptation of a Stephen King short story, He celebrated 12 years in the acting business with his directorial debut on an episode of Sliders and he couldn't have been happier.

After two years of others directing Quinn Mallory's adventures on one alternate Earth after another, O'Connell got to take over the director's chair during the show's third season.

O'Connell's debut as a Sliders' director was the episode, Stoker, in which Quinn and his friends end up on an Earth where vampires exist. As with some of the traditional speculative themes in other episodes, O'Connell's episode became more than just a rehashing of the Dracula. The twist of the adventure was that the Sliders encounter a group of rock'n'roll vampires who have formed a band and are travelling around from town to town.

"They pick up their prey while they're on tour," O'Connell explained.

Before he signed on for Sliders, O'Connell had already made a name for himself in the business, first with appearances in television commercials and in series such as My Secret Identity.

Then there were movies like Stand by Me and Calender Girl, and the title role in Joe's Apartment — based on the MTV video short of the same name, about a young man who finds himself sharing a tenement apartment with a horde of dancing and singing cockroaches. More recently, O'Connell appeared in Jerry McGuire, as Frank Cushman, a star quarterback pursued by Cruise's character.

In between his early television and movie roles and his current stint on Sliders, O'Connell attended New York University. He graduated in 1995 with a major in film and television. Like many actors, O'Connell has had a hankering to try his hand at directing and film school just whetted his desire.

So why this particular episode of Sliders?

He (Quinn) was not ready for it and it was totally unexpected. Somewhat like Sliders. Its success was unexpected.

"I wanted to do something hip and young and what better than this?"

He described the vampire episode as an extended music video, "only a little darker" with the addition of the undead. Stoker featured Vancouver actor/Comedian Tommy Chong as a vampire hunter.

At the time of the interview, O'Connell was five days short of his 23rd birthday. The time seemed right for trying his hand at directing.

"I always had the idea I wanted to direct and what better way than in such a familiar setting.

"I've been in the pool and was familiar with everyone on the set," he said. "I've been waiting for this a long time.

O'Connell added that there are certain advantages to being both the actor performing in a scene and being the director observing the scene.

"The nice thing about acting is you're right there in the middle of the set, It's a pretty comfortable place to direct from. You can see all the action happening around you and you can correct any mistakes."

Sliders was one of the first projects for O'Connell after he graduated from film school. He'd decided that a role in a television series was the best way to get back into acting and ended up looking over hundreds of scripts for various proposed television series.

"Slider was really the only one I read that I really wanted to do."

Like his fellow regulars on the series, Sabrina Lloyd and Cleavant Derricks, O'Connell was intrigued by the premise for the series, journeying to parallel worlds.

"The possibilities were endless. It really sparked my imagination. I think that's partly the appeal from the viewers' perspective. It's a different world every week."

O'Connell gets a great deal of feedback about the series, especially about its alternate Earths premise, when he goes online to skim some of the chat rooms on the Internet and to talk with Sliders fans and viewers of the show.

"I try to answer as many questions as possible."

When Sliders first began, O'Connell saw a lot of parallels between himself and Quinn Mallory. Both were in their early 20s who had found themselves in a "crazy situation," as O'Connell put it.

Mallory's was his serendipitous discovery of a portal allowing access to other Earths and his adventures in those alternate realities. O'Connell's was learning to deal with the eventual success of the series once it finally took off.

"He (Quinn) was not ready for it and it was totally unexpected. Somewhat like Sliders. Its success was unexpected."

Since then, O'Connell observed, the series has become more slick, with more use of special effects like the ones used in Dragonsider and Electric Twister Acid Test to depict some of the parallel worlds.

During his three-plus seasons, the character of Quinn Mallory has evolved since he first began sliding between worlds.

"A lot like I have, I think," O'Connell remarked.

Where Mallory was unprepared at the start of the series for the reality of sliding, now he too has developed an edge in his personality after having learned to deal with the unexpected so much of the time. O'Connell believes that he has also grown and developed as an actor and a person.

"Over the past three years, I have become more ready to expect the impossible. It's been a learning experience."

While sliding may have helped temper Mallory's personality, it also seems to have taken something from him through the various situations the character has found himself. O'Connell agrees

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*Photos courtesy Fox Broadcasting*

**Much like the characters they portray on Sliders, the foursome are good friends in real life — to the point where John Rhys-Davies even demonstrated his culinary skills for Thanksgiving.**

that Mallory has lost some of his innocence through his adventures.

"It's part of the education sliding has given him. It's not only matured him, it's aged him."

O'Connell notes that series' writers have picked up on that aspect of the character and plan to explore it further.

Another parallel between the series and real life is the close relationship between the four sliders.

"We are very close."

O'Connell recalls a time during November of the second season that illustrates this closeness. The American members of the cast were feeling homesick. For them, it was getting close to Thanksgiving. John Rhys-Davies, seeing how depressed the others were, invited them over to his place for dinner. When they arrived, O'Connell said, waiting for them was an 11-kilogram turkey which Rhys-Davies had cooked and readied for carving.

"It was totally unexpected," O'Connell said. "We are like a newly-formed family. We've been together so long (as characters and as people) that it's a good time. We're constantly joking around. It's a party on the set."

Whether in Vancouver or Los Angeles, the time involved in shooting a Sliders episode remains the same.

O'Connell and the rest of the cast go through about 10 pages worth of script per day over a seven-day shooting schedule for each episode. By comparison, work on a movie project like Jerry McGuire moves at a snail's pace with perhaps two pages of script shot in a day.

"It (McGuire's schedule) is really nice and relaxing and you get to work out all the kinks and nuances."

But O'Connell also enjoys the pressure that episodic television demands.

"I really like the pace."

He's also looking forward to more opportunities to exercise his directing skills which was always one of his goals in film school.

Away from the camera, he's also stretched his creative skills by scripting an issue of the Sliders comic book — an exercise he described as "like writing a little film." He considered and planned particular scenes for each panel of art, worked out the dialogue and dealt with other facets of comic book storytelling. He found many similarities in the creative effort behind writing, acting and directing.

While he won't rule out the possibility of perhaps trying his hand again at writing, O'Connell figures that for now he'll focus more on further honing his acting skills and broadening his directing resume.

Whether he makes the trek back north or not, either as a guest or a featured player in a Vancouver- or Toronto-based series, O'Connell is quite happy to continue growing old for awhile longer as Quinn Mallory — just as long as there are new and interesting worlds to see.

"It's impossible to get bored on Sliders," he added. ☆


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# Sinbad's Gentle Giant

## *Toronto's George Buza delights in being a good guy for a change*

*Photos courtesy Atlantis Films Ltd.*

**By**
**GREGG CHAMBERLAIN**

If it wasn't for the beard, ponytail and the earring, George Buza could probably double for The Friendly Giant.

The 45-year-old gentle giant from Toronto finds a lot to appreciate in his role as Doubar on the Adventures of Sinbad.

"After many, many moons of being a bad guy, it's nice to be on the other side and be one of the good guys," Buza explained.

Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, Buza has lived in Canada since 1974 when he performed with Toronto's Young People's Theatre.

He's also performed with the Stratford Festival, the Manitoba Theatre Centre and Toronto's Free Theatre, plus had roles in films like Sodbusters and Meatballs III, the mini-series Glory! Glory! and has had a guest role on Due South.

He was also a member of the cannibal tribe in the motion picture Quest for Fire. But it was his role as Turner, the four-year-old trapped in a man's body, in Maniac Mansion, that truely allowed him to break from the bad-guy mold and gave him a chance to play a hero for a change.

Sinbad creator Ed Naha watched episodes of Maniac Mansion and thought Buza would be perfect for the hero's older brother.

"He's a lot like me. We're both large, gregarious guys. And I also have a younger brother who I'm very protective about and fond of." Buza also enjoys Doubar's down-to-earth nature.

"Doubar is very much a team player. He's always read to lend a helping hand, We are a family and we treat each other as such," Buza explained.

While his own personal fitness regiment includes 200 to 300 stomach crunches, Buza laughs at how often he is expected to live up to Doubar's powerful image.

In the pilot episode, Doubar's first appearance was during a dungeon scene where he breaks his chains without a thought just so he can hug his little brother (Zen Gesner). Buza admits that even he isn't that strong.

"We had to work at that scene. The bricks got stuck. It wasn't so easy."

His daily three-hour exercise routine gets cut down to two hours during the shooting schedule in South Africa. But the action scenes more than make up for the reduction.

"My sword alone weighs about 15 pounds, which is a heckuva thing to toss around. You do that and try charging up a hill and fight bad guys ."

Buza's past training in theatrical sabre fighting, under legendary swordmaster Paddy Crean who doubled for Errol Flynn, helps him in this regard.

During his free moments, Buza divides

**Much like Buza himself, Doubar is a gregarious man who is very protective of his younger brother.**

**While the animated "X-Men" faced their last crisis with episode 76, the popular mutant heroes including the Beast (voiced by George Buza), are sure to continue their adventures — along with those of Sinbad in syndication.**

*Photos Courtesy Atlantis Films Ltd.*
*Beast © and TM Marvel Comics Group*

his time between his family, his motorcycle and his stamp collection. He holds a bachelor's degree in theatre arts and could try his hand at directing an episode of Sinbad, but he has no plans to stop acting.

"To me, the fun part is performing. My first love is acting. I would, at some point, like to play Falstaff," he confides. "Zen would be a perfect Prince Hal in Henry IV, Part I. We've talked about that."

Beyond that, Buza is quite content with his world.

"I've had a wonderful life."

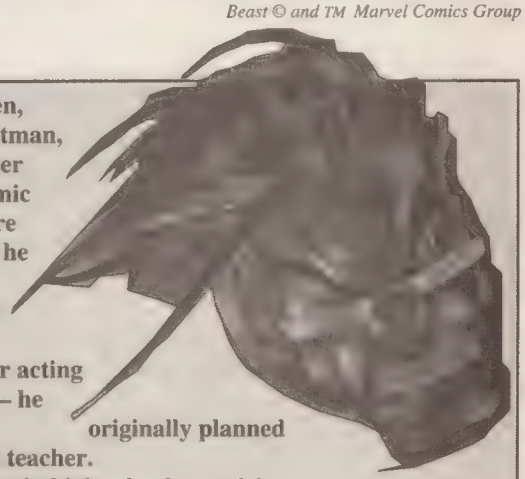
George Buza is a large man with a commanding presence and a most distinctive voice. Even if viewers don't immediately recognize Buza from his character Doubar on the fantasy television series, "The Adventures of Sinbad," they will surely know his voice. Buza has been providing the articulate tones of the Beast for 76 episodes of the animated X-Men series, televised worldwide, for the past six years.

"After a long auditioning process, the people at Fox, Saban Entertainment and Marvel Comics all agreed that mine was the voice that they wanted for the Beast," Buza remembers. Indeed, Buza's eminently cultured speaking manner proved perfect for the Beast, who is the furry, blue, mutant member of the X-Men fond of quoting from the classics.

"The Beast is the voice of reason, while Wolverine is the voice of emotion," comments Buza. "I approach my animated role in the same way that I would approach an on-camera role. The only difference is that my voice has to reflect all the movement."

A sought-after actor who prefers to live and work in Canada, Buza has also supplied voices for such other high-profile animated projects as Dog City, Richard Scarry and Little Bear.

While Buza read and enjoyed comic books as a youth ("I read the X-Men, Superman, Batman, and all the other super hero comic books that were out," he says), he never envisioned playing a fantasy character — or acting at all, in fact — he originally planned on becoming a teacher.



"When I was in high school, my girlfriend went to a different high school—it was an all-girl's school—and they needed men to try out for their plays," recalls Buza. "At that time, theatre was the farthest thing from my mind. But I was hooked the minute I stepped out on stage. I knew that acting was the life for me—just like in that song from Pinnochio."

After high school, Buza continued to study acting at university in the United States. "I did my schooling, training and early years of acting in the States," Buza says. "Then, I came to Canada in 1974 to do a part, and I just fell in love with Toronto. I decided that this was going to be my home."

### Hollywood North

Buza has seen the opportunities for actors in Canada grow since his move to Toronto. "A lot of the series that are made for American television are made here now, as are a lot of movies. However, the opportunities for Canadian actors aren't always as good as if they were based in the States," Buza says.

Then he adds, "But you pay a different price for living in a different environment. Los Angeles is much more cut-throat, and there's a lot more competition. And also you have earthquakes and smog, and I don't like those!"

— Janet L. Hetherington

# Vancouver f/x house helps last-minute drive to get movie to theatres

OK, you have a major visual-effects science fiction extravaganza slated to hit theatres in less than a month. There's just one problem. The visual effects side of the production are running behind schedule.

Who can you call to save the day?

That was the dilemma facing New Line Cinema when Spawn's Aug. 1 premiere date loomed before them.

So they got on the telephone and called Northwest Imaging Effects and FX in Vancouver, B.C. Brian Moylan, Northwest Imaging's Inferno artist, loved the challenge despite the tight schedule.

"There was a lot of FX in the film. It was very FX heavy."

Moylan and the rest of the people at Northwest Imaging were called in as one of several sub-contractors to Industrial Light and Magic. They took some of the overflow computer-generated imaging work needed on Spawn to get the moody superhero movie read in time for its summer debut in North American theatres.

Northwest Imaging has worked on various television series shot in the Vancouver area such as Poltergeist: The Legacy and The Outer Limits. The company's track record has impressed people in the industry and led to New Line's call.

Besides having such an excellent track record, Northwest Imaging was also lucky to have the inside track on the Spawn project. Sandra Almond, a visual effects producer/supervisor at Northwest Imaging, used to work with Steve Williams, the visual effects supervisor and second-unit director on Spawn.

Williams, Spawn producer Clint Goldman and director Mark Dippé called Almond.

"They knew I was doing FX work in Canada," Almond recalled. "They said they had some extra work that needed to be done in time for the August release and did I know anyone."

Williams, Goldman and Dippé figured that if anyone knew who to call, Almond would. Both she and the threesome used to work at Industrial Light and Magic. Almond's first project at George Lucas's company was The Rocketeer. Then she went on to assist on Death Becomes Her.

Memoirs of an Invisible Man was Almond's last project at ILM before she

headed back home to Canada to freelance in the Vancouver area. She worked on series such as M.A.N.T.I.S. and Legend before settling in with Northwest Imaging. She became the main liaison between Northwest Imaging and Industrial Light and Magic. her main duty was to make sure that the visual effects required for the movie were completed on time and the way ILM wanted them done.

"They were very happy with the work we'd done," Almond said.

Most of the work involved the computer-generated image (CGI) cape effects created by Habib Zargarpour, Spawn's associate visual effects supervisor. What began as a one-shot piecework assignment expanded just like Spawn's cape into a major project for the small company.

"First of all, it was just the one shot," Almond explained. "we did that really quickly and the really liked it. They approached us to do three more cape shots."

After the first effect was completed, Northwest Imaging was asked to take on some more of the overflow work which included creating a CGI energy bolt flare in a scene where one character gets struck by an electrical arc, as well as performing various "squib" hits for scenes where characters appear to have been shot by bullets.

"We've turned around a really close look with all the limitations we faced. We pulled it off. They were so pleased, they just loved it."

– Sandra Almond

Industrial Light and Magic sent Northwest Imaging all the filmed backgrounds that were required along with directions regarding which effects were needed in particular scenes.

Moylan noted that a few of the shots which they got showed Spawn jumping through the frames. These were scenes which involved the stuntmen dressed as Spawn, but without the cape. Northwest Imaging added the CGI cape effects based on ILM's instructions. Northwest Imaging used the Softimage system developed by Softimage of Montreal.

"We handed the scene to our animators, Matthew Talbot-Kelly and Dave Howe, and they actually built a cape in the 3-D animation software," Moylan said. "They animated the cape, waved it to make it move through the frames so it matched the movements of the stuntmen as he moved through the frames."

Both Moylan and Almond said that, while it may not seem too difficult to laymen, animating a cape is not as easy a job as it sounds — especially not the type of cape which drapes Spawn's tortured shoulders.

"It's not just a fabric cape," Almond said. "It has a life of its own."

She added that an additional problem for Northwest Imaging was that the company's animators were having to work within the parametres which somebody else had already established.

"Our challenge was to match a look that's already been developed," she said.

Almond, Moylan and the rest of the crew studied videos of finished Spawn work done by Industrial Light and Magic, and noted how particular motions of the cape appeared on the screen. They then tried to figure out how they could duplicate those same movements.

"You really get into the details," Almond remarked.

This presented another challenge, since the company only had about a month to complete their assignment and match the quality that had been achieved by other people who had about 10 months to complete the same work during the post-production portion of the Spawn project.

Moylan observed that the work involved in animating Spawn's cape is almost a classic case of critical need for a visual effect to not look like a visual effect.

"The fact is that, even though it's a short shot with the cape whipping throughout the frame, there are a lot of subtle visual cues needed to make it look realistic."

He pointed out that the animators have to consider the speed of the ripples in the fabric moving along with the cape while it is in motion plus the changing highlights and shadows as the cape moves.

"If any one of these is wrong, then it will look wrong to the audience," Moylan said, adding that the viewers may not be able to point out exactly what is wrong, but they will be able to sense that something is not quite right. They will also be able to tell they are watching a piece of visual effects work and not an actual cape in motion.

The average Spawn shot for Northwest Imaging amounted to about two seconds worth of animation involving between 20 to 50 frames of film. In the end, they had about a dozen separate pieces of CGI to do which, including the animators' work and Moylan's compositing, totalled about 200 hours of sweating over keyboards. Moylan utilized the Inferno system from Discreet Logic of Montreal to splice together Talbot-Kelly's and Howe's animation work with the film's backgrounds. Then he and Almond spent days reviewing all of the different elements of the scenes and tweaking them to make them all blend together smoothly.

"We did everything from adding lighting effects, film grain, smoke, whatever the action called for."

The fact that Northwest Imaging was asked to take on more of the overflow on the Spawn project after its initial one-shot assignment was completed is a tribute to the quality of its CGI work.

"We've turned around a really close look with all the limitations we faced," Almond said. "We pulled it off. They were so pleased, they just loved it."

She added that Industrial Light and Magic and New Line Cinema may have been a little shocked that Northwest Imaging was able to perform so much work, so well, on short notice.

Spawn is a critical step for Northwest Imaging's future in the industry. Until the call from New Line, the company had been limited for the most part to doing work on various television productions, both movies and series.

"Making the jump into feature films is a big step and we want to make that step, " Moylan said. "Spawn is a kind of landmark job for us."

Almond agreed that Northwest Imaging's work on Spawn was a significant step for the Vancouver company.

"I would hope so. In Canada, the companies here are a lot smaller. Features are shot here, but they're not posted (post-production) here." Almond said that Northwest Imaging's success on Spawn could encourage more feature film post-production work being performed in Vancouver rather than in Los Angles.

"I think we need to chip away and do stuff like this," she said, "and show them what we can do."

☆

# NIGHTMARE beneath the ice

Story by
*Eric Brown*
Art by
*Stefan Valent*

Far out from the blue planet, space churned, a brief anomaly in the local matrix of the universe. A spacecraft emerged from that distortion, took rapid sightings on the sun and several other prominent stars, then sped inwards as the portal flowed shut behind it.

Not a single observer on the blue planet noted its coming, for the craft resembled a tiny, dark asteroid, and by the time it plunged past the orbit of the fourth planet the engines had been stilled. Yet it gained speed as it responded, initially to the tug of the sun, and then to the gravity field of the blue planet.

When hidden from sight on the far side of the moon the engines flared again to affect the final course correction; but the main thrusters malfunctioned, and as the craft cleared the moon the inhabitants prepared to die in the atmosphere of the target planet.

Had they been human they might have been distraught, fearful, saddened that they had come so far on such an important mission only to perish at its climax. However, they were not human, and emotions were not at all a part of their being.

The incessant grinding and moaning of the restless ice pack intruded once more into Joanne's thoughts, a persistent reminder of the frigid Arctic depths in which Sealab was submerged. Angrily she shut down the SONAR display and sat back. The tension was rising again, a dull ache which spread across the shoulders and up into her neck. She sensed movement behind her and leaned back as Rick's fingers lightly caressed her auburn curls, then the smooth nape of her neck before kneading and massaging the taut muscles. She closed her eyes and willed herself to relax. Perhaps the headache wouldn't start this time.

He spoke softly. "One more day and we're out of here, Jo."

Neils added from across the Control Module.

"Ja. And about time. We Norsemen are supposed to pillage our way across the surface of the ocean, not sit on our asses on the bottom."

A sharp twang startled them as it reverberated through the steel shell of the lab. Neils looked up in disgust. "Goddam ice just snapped the antenna cable. Must be quite a storm topside."

Joanne leaned back and let Rick's arms enfold her. She sighed. "You know what that means. It'll be days before they can get the submersible into position. We're stuck down here for a bit longer than planned."

Neils stood up, a huge bear of a man. Widely set, deep blue eyes peered out from beneath a tangle of blond hair. His voice rumbled from the depths of his chest. "Lucky bastards are probably going to head south to ride this one out. Spend a little R and R in Bermuda."

"Cynics everywhere," Rick muttered.

Joanne started as a rasping, scraping noise filled the lab. "Damn," she muttered. "I should have expected that. It's the cable . . . right?"

Rick nodded.

"Let's hope it doesn't do any damage. We've got a few kilometres of it sliding down on top of us." They listened intently for several minutes. Gradually the scraping sound diminished. Joanne activated the SONAR. After a moment she pointed to a blip on the screen. "There it is, over towards the northeast. Shouldn't do any harm there." Rick studied the display. "That's good. The last thing we needed was a breach in the shell while Mothership's away."

When the blip disappeared from the SONAR screen, Rick switched on the outside floods. Television monitors presented a murky scene; clouds of sediment had been kicked up by the thrashing cable. It was some time before the gentle Arctic current bore the silt away and they could see the coiled wire, looping and arcing in surrealistic whorls across the ocean floor. Joanne was reminded of tentacles. She shuddered.

Rick looked over at Neils. "Now's a good time to retrieve those instrument packages from the ridge."

Neils nodded in agreement and the two headed for the Access Pod, followed a few minutes later by Joanne.

At the centre of the pod was a circular shaft into which the sea water had risen to within a half metre of the floor, forming a smooth, dark pool. Joanne arrived in time to watch as Neils slid down into the ice-cold water, protected by his bulky thermosuit. His body didn't require much in the way of weights to achieve neutral buoyancy. Rick's smaller, lithe body followed, his grey eyes smiling at Joanne as he sank out of view.

She returned to the Control Module and followed the progress of the men on SONAR. They had boarded the underwa-

ter sled and were already a hundred metres away from the lab, heading directly towards the mid-Atlantic ridge which rose between Greenland on the west and Spitsbergen on the east. She glanced at the water temperature, 0.4-C, normal for a current which flowed straight from the Arctic Basin. The blip grew indistinct as they sped farther away. After a few kilometres, they had vanished from the display.

Joanne began to feel lonely. She checked her watch; the men had oxygen to last about an hour and a half, more than enough time to reach the ridge, detach and secure the seismometer and thermal flux packages, and return to Sealab.

She wandered over to one of the ports and gazed out into the depths. The immediate region about the lab was brightly illuminated, the power coming from a small nuclear reactor. But aside from the fantastic landscape created by the smooth undulations of three kilometres of antenna cable, there was little to see. Few fish inhabited these frigid depths, and those tended to stay near the magma vents of the ridge.

A quick tour of the Research Pod verified that the experiments had all been shut down and stowed, ready for collection by the submersible. The Storage Pod was similarly prepared. All the equipment that would be left behind was stashed in lockers, the rest crated for fast removal. The explosive charges were carefully packed in specially designed steel cases and sealed with combination locks.

She paused in front of a tiny mirror hung just beside the head and regarded her reflection with disgust. The month beneath the sea had not been kind. Her brown eyes were permanently bloodshot, a result of the huge atmospheric pressure under which they lived, and wrinkles were now spreading across her forehead. She experimentally brushed her curls forward, but her hair was still not long enough to mask them. How Rick could find her attractive was a mystery.

As she turned away the deck slammed upwards, tossing her sprawling across the floor. In a daze she staggered to her feet and stumbled into the Control Module. What had happened? The pod seemed dimmer. Several warning lights were flashing. She took a couple of deep breaths to clear her head before focussing upon their sectors. She saw that the station itself was tilted, but not severely enough to affect life support or interfere with the access pool. She cancelled that alarm. The SONAR display was blank, the computer registering a fault in the antenna circuit. Possibly they could jury rig a replacement when the guys returned. A slight leak had occurred in the coolant system for the reactor, and the computer had automatically shut down the affected region. The remaining cooling segments should be able to keep the reactor under control, although the engineers who would have to replace the system wouldn't be too happy. Their tough luck.

But what had happened? It had felt like an explosion. She rechecked all the readouts. None of the pods had been breached, and although the outer shell had been warped it was still intact. "For how much longer?" she muttered to herself.

So the blast had not occurred inside the station. Her mind raced. Outside! It had been outside! A shock wave. Her mind wanted to slip away from the implications. "Oh Christ, no!"

She stumbled against a chair in her haste to look out through a port. A few of the floods were still lit, and in their patchy glare she could see the turmoil. Sediment swooped in frantic vortices through the shafts of light. In desperation she traced their passage.

From the east.

From the direction of the ridge.

Rick and Neils were out there.

But this can't be happening! They don't have any explosives with them. And none had been left along the ridge. Sections of cable had been thrown against the lab. So the shock had in fact come from the east.

Oh my God! Where are the guys?

Tears misted her eyes and she remained at the port for a long time, peering desperately into the murky depths. The water was gradually clearing, but there was no sign of the men. She raced into the Access Pod and began to don her own suit when the reality of the situation hit her. There was nothing she could do. Without the sled she couldn't reach the ridge and return before her own oxygen ran out.

At least she could provide a beacon. The reactor could run a little hot for a few hours. Wouldn't do the fuel rods much good, but this was an emergency. Quickly she coded instructions into the computer and almost immediately the inside and outside lights grew brighter. The SONAR was nonfunctional, but the emergency klaxon still worked. She switched it on. Even inside the station she could hear the wail.

Its sound would carry through the water far better than the light. And Mothership would know they were in trouble, if they were still around. She sat down next to the east view port and waited. The first hour passed, then an hour and a quarter. They didn't have much oxygen left. Worriedly, she scanned the dark depths outside the port. She refused to look at her watch. Still no sign, no smears of light in the distance, no motion other than the slow drift of sediment.

*She couldn't stand it any longer; she glanced at her watch. Two hours. A chill crept through her mind. They were dead, they had to be.*

She couldn't stand it any longer; she glanced at her watch. Two hours.

A chill crept through her mind. They were dead, they had to be. Perhaps they had made it to the surface, but with their limited oxygen they didn't have time to allow for gradual decompression. And if they had made it to the surface they would perish, either from the bends or from exposure on the ice pack. No, they wouldn't have tried that.

My God, what had happened?

She clutched at a possibility. Did Neils actually take one of the main oxygen mixture tanks along?

He could easily have lashed it to the sled. Scarcely breathing, she ran back into the Access Pod. The water in the pool slanted slightly, evidence of the tilt of the lab. Fastened along the walls were the larger tanks all of them. She counted again to make sure. Neils had not taken any extra supply. Her watch now indicated that two and a quarter hours had passed.

As if trapped inside a bad dream she paced around Sealab the Research pod, Storage Pod, Reactor Pod. They weren't hiding, playing some ghastly trick on her. They hadn't returned.

They were dead.

Mechanically she checked the escape module. It seemed to be intact. At least she could float to the surface and remain pressurized for some time. But in a storm? With limited oxygen supplies? And she would need to be plunged into Mothership's decompression chamber the instant the module was opened. Her only choice was to stay put until the storm blew itself out. She sat down beside the view

port. Now the tears came as sobs wracked her body. Eventually exhaustion claimed her and she drifted off to sleep, her head nestled against the cold, half metre thick glass.

Hours later she awoke. The nightmare had not dissipated upon her awakening. Without any real hope she stared out into the cold undersea world. A flicker of motion caught her eye. Yes, just at the edge of the floodlights she could make out a small shadowy outline, swimming awkwardly towards the station. It had to be Rick. Her mind registered that one arm hung limply, but refused to acknowledge the lack of bubbles.

***The creature stood still, then sagged to the floor. Its mouth opened as it forced air into dead lungs. The sound that emerged was a nightmarish parody of Rick's voice.***

She sped to the Access Pod and waited as a shape appeared under the pool and slowly rose. When the figure broke the surface she reached forward to help, then recoiled violently. Under the scuba mask Rick's face hung in shreds. His suit was ripped, and through the holes she could see gaping wounds and the dull white gleam of bone. Gnawed chunks of bleached flesh quivered where one arm had been severed at the wrist. As he crawled out of the pool she realized that he carried no tanks. She scrambled to the equipment racks along the wall and grasped a spear gun.

"Stay away from me," she screamed at the dripping figure.

Its head swivelled towards the sound, dead eyes seemed to seek her from behind the mask.

"Keep back or I'll take your head off with this gun."

The creature stood still, then sagged to the floor. Its mouth opened as it forced air into dead lungs. The sound that emerged was a nightmarish parody of Rick's voice. In horror she listened as it attempted to form words. Bits of tooth and bone fragments sprayed out as it forced sibilant speech from the ruined mouth. "I wisss you no haarm. Pleesss believe me. You will unnersan ssoon."

It rose sluggishly to its feet. Joanne kept the spear gun pointed shakily at the creature. Her voice trembled. "I don't believe this. I must be going mad. You don't exist."

It gulped down a second lungful of air and continued. "Wat iss to believe? You are nod blind. I am here."

As the creature shuffled forward, Joanne took a couple of steps backwards. "Don't move!" She tried to sound firm, but the words sounded in her own ears like a quivering plea.

"Don't come near me, or I WILL use this thing."

The body that had been Rick stood still and waited. Finally Joanne broke the silence. "What are you?" she whispered.

"A trafffeller. We crassed upon your planet. Only I survifffed. After the exploshun I driffted in the water until I foun thiss body. He wass dead, but I could run hiss brain anywayss."

It stopped to gulp down another breath. "You are aliffe. Your body workss. I will run you eassily."

"Oh God!" Joanne cried.

She aimed and fired. The spear tore through the body, ripping out a chunk of shoulder, and the creature staggered backwards.

"That wass foollissh," it hissed.

Again it advanced, a slow shuffling motion while it dripped water and shreds of flesh. Joanne spun away and ran frantically out of the pod. She pulled the hatch shut, then remembered that it didn't lock. Perhaps the creature wouldn't know how to get it open. But as she watched, the handle jerked downwards and the metal door began to swing backwards.

In a panic she ran across the Control Module to the Storage Pod, slamming that hatch behind her. With luck the creature would take some time to figure out where she was. She opened a locker and stepped in. "No," she thought. "I can't let myself be trapped like that."

Her eyes spotted the explosives cases. As she tipped one over on its side to unlock it, she heard the door swing open. The creature lurched inwards. In horror Joanne saw that it had sprouted a long fleshy protuberance from its shattered wrist. It seemed to grope around with a life of its own.

The figure stopped, turned towards her, and spoke. "Why run? You haff nowhere to go. When we merge, I will take good care of your body. You will liff a long time wiss me in your brain.

"No damn you!" Joanne threw the case at the creature's head then dove past and through the hatch while it tumbled to the side. Quickly she kicked the hatch closed, grabbed a metal chair and jammed it under the handle.

Just in time. The handle began to shake, but the mechanism wouldn't release. Hardly daring to draw a breath she stared at that handle. Minutes dragged by as it banged repeatedly up and down. But never far enough to release the hatch.

"I've got you, you bastard," she hissed.

The nervous reaction surprised her. Sudden cramps gripped her stomach and she retched until the last stomach fluids had splattered across the floor. She slid down the bulkhead opposite the Storage Pod until she slumped upon the floor, her eyes focussed intently upon the handle. Her limbs trembled; her breaths came in shuddering spasms. But when no sounds issued from behind the barred hatch for over an hour, she leaned her head back and willed herself to relax.

She slept. And in that sleep she did not hear the muffled bump nor see the line of condensation creep up the opposite wall as frigid water poured into the Storage Pod.

It was the slithering sound that woke her. Groggily she opened her eyes as cold flesh twisted around her neck. She screamed in terror at the dripping figure which towered above her. She tried to rip the protuberance away from her neck but it had fused to her skin. She clawed at it, attempting to gouge out chunks, then stiffened as pain flamed along her nerves.

The creature's words, no longer hindered by a ravaged face, sounded inside her skull. "You cannot fight me. I can crush you with more pain than you could ever stand."

She tried to speak, but the fleshy tentacle had covered her mouth.

Words sounded again. "You don't have to talk to me ever again, Joanne. Just think the words. Already part of me is inside your skull. I will hear you just as clearly as you can hear me. Understand?"

Joanne's thoughts shrieked, "Get out of my head!"

Immediately, pain flooded throughout her body and she sagged against the bulkhead. "OK. I believe. What do you want from me?"

"I will have your body and mind intact. The more primitive regions of your brain

will be left free to perform the routine functions of our body. The higher regions will be run by myself as soon as my brain strands have grown within your skull."

Joanne suddenly rolled to the side, pulling the creature off balance. It landed on top of her and she squirmed wildly to get out from under. Her head seemed to explode with pain; she stopped struggling.

The creature pushed up to a sitting position beside her.

"That was futile. Do not try it again. All you can do is some slight damage to this dead body. And now that I have you, I won't need this carcass much longer."

*Joanne regarded the alien with loathing. "So what's stopping you from completely taking me over right now?"*

The pain eased off. Joanne found her head turning to look at her tormenter and nearly fainted. One eye was sliding down its shredded cheek, leaving behind a glistening, gelatinous track. It didn't seem to notice. She tried to shut her eyes, but her eyelids no longer responded to her will.

"This will be a new experience. In all the millennia that my race has travelled throughout this galaxy, we have never encountered a species with intelligence that approaches our own. The domination of you humans will open up vast possibilities. I will achieve great status when I summon the others."

Joanne regarded the alien with loathing. "So what's stopping you from completely taking me over right now?"

"Nothing, really. However, it has been our experience with simpler organisms that the complete subjugation of the brain occurs far easier when the creature is dormant, assuming of course that the species sleeps. There is less opposition."

"You expect me to fall asleep like this?"

"Naturally. You cannot stay awake forever. But I can. Then while you sleep I will take over."

Joanne glared at the creature, frantically trying to plot an escape.

Once again it spoke inside her mind. "You must realize by now that I perceive all your knowledge, all your thoughts. You can hide nothing from me."

The hideous wait began. Joanne was desperately tired, but refused to give in. She thought of her friends and replayed memories from her childhood. She tried to recall every detail about her parents, and was appalled at how little she could actually remember. Isolated incidents, some laughter, desolation when her brother died in a car crash, her father's depression afterwards. She should have seen more of them at the time, but it was easier to stay away from the gloomy household.

She recalled her schooling at the Halifax Marine Institute, and her subsequent work with the Oceanic Research Team. And then Rick. A lot of good times, topside and in Sealab. A weekend trip to Peggy's Cove where they clambered over the huge rocks which defied the ocean, and made love in a hidden nook scoured out of the rock by eons of crashing waves.

She cried a little, and as tears stung her eyes, she closed them. Under the control of the alien, her heartbeat slowed down, her breathing became deeper. Muscles, once rigid, relaxed. Lulled by her memories of Rick, she drifted into sleep.

She ran naked through a menacing wood. Gnarled trees arched overhead, reducing the daylight to dim, murky shadows. Thick, fleshy vines twitched as she passed. A root broke the surface before her feet and she tumbled headfirst into a moist gorse whose thorns ripped her face and arms. She rolled away and stood up. Although the air was heavy and still, all around her the vines rustled, a dry rattling sound. From above her came an insistent chittering.

A drop of burning liquid splattered across her breast. Anxiously she tried to brush it away when a second drop seared down her cheek. She looked up. Thick furry strands hung from tree to tree, interwoven to form a gigantic web. And there, in the high dark regions, something huge moved. Her eyes could just make out a shadow which darted back and forth along the strands, steadily descending. The chittering grew louder. As it came nearer she could discern a bloated underbelly of mottled green and orange. Hungry red eyes glared downwards.

She stared mesmerized, aware that roots were wrapping themselves tightly about her ankles and legs yet powerless to break away. The creature dropped heavily, slamming her into the damp ground. Its rank body filled her mouth and nose. She shook with terror as the breath was squeezed out of her lungs. Screams echoed inside her skull.

Then she heard the sound, faint at first beneath her own terrified screams, a rapid drumming which grew ever closer, ever louder. She awoke shrieking, bile clogging her throat, breath coming in convulsive gasps. The steady drumming continued. She looked down, at first unaware of what she was seeing.

Beside her, the dead body was gripped with convulsions; its head slammed repeatedly against the floor, its limbs trembled violently. The one remaining eye seemed to stare through her. Gradually she became aware that it was speaking to her.

"You feel . . . you dream . . . couldn sstop you . . . neffer before knew about terrorss, fearss . . . muss ged away . . ."

Still twitching, it began to slither across the floor towards the Access Pod.

Joanne stared at it, then smiled grimly. She rose to her feet and walked purposefully into Research. In less than a minute, she emerged wearing rubber gloves and a gas mask. Her arms cradled a large glass Winchester within which a clear, viscous fluid sloshed languidly.

The creature had worked its way crablike through the hatch and was half way to the pool. Carefully she skirted the figure and began to methodically splash sulphuric acid across the floor between the creature and its path to freedom. Then, taking care to avoid any contact with the acid, she poured the fluid upon the creature's head, down its body, and along its thrashing limbs. She waited as it writhed in agony. When the movements slowed, she repeatedly doused it while the flesh bubbled, blackened and flaked off, exposing the inner layers of entwined human and alien tissue to the ravages of the fuming acid.

"If you get a chance, tell your ugly chums about this," she spat. "You'll get lots of status."

When the bottle was empty and nothing but a charred mass remained on the floor, she backed out of the pod and firmly closed the hatch. Then, the horror over, she sat down in a chair and began to laugh and cry hysterically. In time, sanity of a sort returned; she grew silent, calmer.

At the view port she spent hours staring bleakly into the dark, frigid depths while far overhead the ice pack creaked and groaned beneath an Arctic storm.

☆

# The Serpents of Europa

**The ice surface blew apart with an explosive shock of flying ice and water.**

Story by
*A. Jaye Williams*
Art by
*Jean-Pierre Normand*

The cargo pod carried a full capacity of minerals and elements: iron, copper, carbon, gold and sulphur, as well as others. Many more elements than anyone had anticipated seventy years ago. It flew from the underwater environment of Europa to outer space, leaving a dark cloud of smoke trailing back to its place of origin: Adam 5.

Adam 5: the first mining installation on Jupiter's moon, Europa. Callisto and Ganymede, two of Jupiter's other moons, each had two very profitable mining stations.

But Adam 5 was different.

It was the first on Europa, and the first to be underwater. Since Adam 5 was sponsored by several independent businesses and corporations back on Earth, it didn't have to obey any legal practises. It was A. D. 2067 and laws for interstellar mining and expeditions were still non-existent. Even safety laws were minimal, and the high-priced lawyers took care of any judicial problems that arose.

"Homer. Status report on Pod 1123," said Jenna Sampson, the Foreman of the seven-person crew that occupied Adam 5.

"Pod 1123 is leaving orbit. Hull integrity at maximum. Fuel levels at three quarters. Trajectory is on course for Space Station Cain."

The metallic voice of the Adam 5 computer system, called Homer, irritated the young foreman. To her, it was like listening to a metal glove slowly scraping down a chalkboard.

"Thank you, Homer," Jenna said, suppressing a bitter response of disgust. "Just tell me if everything is okay."

"All readings register . . . okay," Homer stated.

As Jenna Sampson sat back in her easy chair, the hydraulic sounds of the door to her office, brought her attention to a tall, slender man. He was a square faced man in his mid-thirties. He was dark complexioned, being from the Caribbean—Barbados, to be specific. By all accounts he should be in the military, but for some unknown reason—a reason he didn't even reveal to his Foreman—he was not.

"Sir," said Michael Armogan in a loud, guttural tone.

Jenna sighed. Leaning her elbows on her desk, she asked, "What is it, Mike? And it better be important. You're not the Assistant Foreman for nothing you know."

"Yes sir," Michael responded. "Jason Hillerman, Hero Grey, and Achilles VanDorn are ready to detonate the explosives."

Jenna jumped up from behind her desk excitedly. This was a first. All the mining under the surface of Europa had been minor excavations. No heavy explosives had yet been used. This was by far going to be the most important event yet. Either plenty of minerals would be discovered, or else . . . well, no one liked to think about the negative possibilities.

Jenna and Michael arrived at the Communications Centre of Adam 5 a minute later. Already present was Spider Microv, considered by everyone on the station to be the best micro-geologist present, and the worst tempered person on board. To most everyone's misfortune, she was also a physical powerhouse.

During the two weeks the crew had been on Adam 5, she had sent Jason Hillerman and Miles Shepherd to the infirmary on four different occasions. Achilles VanDorn had gotten into a fight with her too. He was much bigger and stronger than Spider, but that only saved him from being sent to the infirmary. Bruises and minor cuts were not treated.

ooking out the main view port with her was a short, rotund man by the name of Miles Shepherd. Miles, to say the least, was not known for his aggressive manner. In fact, he was only on Adam 5 to keep himself out of prison back on Earth. In a deal he made with one of the companies that sponsored Adam 5's expedition, he was able to ward off charges of embezzlement if he acted as a geological surveyor on Europa. The idea scared the hell out of him, but so did spending twenty years in prison.

"How do things look?" Jenna asked.

"They're just about at a safe distance, sir," Spider said, thumbing in the direction of a far ridge at the base of a huge underwater cliff. "Achilles is just awaiting your order."

Trembling slightly, Miles shook his head. "You couldn't pay me enough to go out there."

"Stop yer whining, Shepherd," Spider interrupted. "We all know how gutless you are."

"I may be a coward, but at least I'm alive to brag about it."

Spider made a threatening gesture toward Miles. Before she could get near him, Michael blocked her way.

Jenna sighed to herself. This was typical of those two, she thought. Possibly the most important event in recent history was about to take place, and all they could do was argue.

Jenna put a radio headset on and leaned against the main view port window; she looked as hard as she could through the clear, green tint of Europa's ocean. After looking intently for a moment, she finally caught sight of her three crew members. They were in their metallic, deep-sea gear, which looked more like robotic wrestlers than swimming apparatuses. They were less than a mile from the station. Jenna could see that they were all right and awaiting her orders.

"Come in Achilles. Do you read me?" Jenna said into her headset.

"Coming in loud and clear, ma'am." Achilles replied.

Jenna smiled. Achilles was the only one that called her "ma'am." Spider and Hero both found the term degrading, but Jenna knew he meant no harm, and that he used it as a term of respect.

"Is your party okay?" Jenna asked.

"We're all fine, ma'am. A bit winded. We been out here goin' on six hours," Achilles replied. "We're just awaiting your order to let her blow."

Suddenly, another man's voice interrupted. "Will you tell sweet-cheeks to give the bloody order, muscle-head. Me and Spider have a date in my quarters tonight, and I need time to—"

"Clam up, Hillerman!" Achilles yelled back.

"Yes, Mr. Hillerman," Jenna said. "Please be quiet and I'll give the order."

Jason Hillerman was taken aback. "Oh, crap. I'm patched into—She can hear me—Damn! Sorry, sir. Didn't mean anything—I-I was—"

"I said shut it, Hillerman!" Achilles yelled again.

The order given, the three crew members slowly walked across the surface of Europa's ocean bed. A minute later they had taken sufficient cover. Jenna could no longer see them, and had to rely on radio contact from then on.

"In five, people," Jenna said. "Five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . ONE!"

momentary pause. Nothing happened. But, just as Miles was about to say something, it occurred. A massive explosion almost two miles away. Jenna Sampson, Michael Armogan, Spider Microv, and Miles Shepherd were frozen to the main view port. They witnessed the whole side of a mountain exploding, immeasurable chunks of debris and water flying upwards. The frozen surface of the ocean, over a mile above sea level, cracked, fracturing into glaciers and drifts. The tremors and shock waves were barely felt by the station, but the crew outside Adam 5 were experiencing a indescribable amount of pressure and force.

Hidden inside a trench some two hundred yards deep and fifty yards wide, Achilles VanDorn, Jason Hillerman, and Hero Grey held onto each other with their metallic hands. The feet of their suits were dug deep into the sides of the crevice. They were safe, just as Hero had predicted they would be before they even left Adam 5 six hours ago.

What they did not take into account was that it took a good half hour before

**Jenna and Michael arrived at the Communications Centre of Adam 5 a minute later. Already present was Spider Microv, considered by everyone on the station to be the best micro-geologist present, and the worst tempered person on board.**

everything—shock waves, falling debris, pressure, and such—settled down.

"Woe, baby-baby!" Hero cried out. "That was freakin' awesome! Pure grad-rush!!" Hero was the first to climb out of the trench and look at their results.

Achilles and Jason looked at each other, blank stares on their faces, cold sweat running down their cheeks. Nervously, and with great care, they joined Hero.

"Wasn't that boss, boys?!" Hero exclaimed.

"I gotta change my shorts," Jason whimpered, almost succumbing to uncontrolled tears. "W-why didn't you tell me i-it would be like that? You said we wouldn't f-feel a thing."

Achilles remained silent. His way of dealing with unexpected terror was to say nothing at all. And he never felt like being more silent in his life.

"Achilles. Jason. Hero. Come in. Do you read? Come in," came a voice over the comm. links.

"Aside from Jason needing a change of underwear, ma'am, we're all A-okay. You copy?" Achilles replied.

Jenna was relieved. She took Hero's word that the explosion, though grandiose and spectacular, would not be dangerous for them. However, that did not prepare her or anyone else for what they had witnessed.

"Get back here, Achilles. I want you and your group on Adam 5," Jenna ordered, hiding any stress in her voice.

Seven days later. The crew of Adam 5 had managed to excavate over five tons of zinc, nickel, copper, sulfur, calcium, and at least a dozen other elements. The outlook for Adam 5 was a good one. Which pleased everyone but Miles Shepherd. Though he wouldn't admit it, if the mining had failed, he would have been sent back

to Earth and straight to prison. As Miles understood it, his geological surveying was more like the sentence for his crimes rather than a trade off.

It was now 11:00 p. m., standard Earth time, and everyone was off duty for the day. Spider, Achilles, Hero, and Jason were playing their usual late night poker game in the crews general quarters. The game had been going on for two hours, and Hero was winning the night.

It was the last hand. Spider and Achilles folded, leaving Hero and Jason to duel it out.

**Jason almost jumped out of his seat in excitement. Spider and Achilles didn't. Losing all of their money to Hero was one thing, but seeing Jason Hillerman—the living testament of excessive male ego—win, was like drinking a mug of warm onion beer. Extremely distasteful.**

"I see your fifty and call," Jason said, a trickle of sweat glistening on his brow. "What've you got, sweety?"

Hero sneered at him. She then paused for a moment, letting Jason sweat a little more. Then, as if calculating every precise second, she laid down two cards.

"Just two black aces,"

Jason almost jumped out of his seat in excitement. Spider and Achilles didn't. Losing all of their money to Hero was one thing, but seeing Jason Hillerman—the living testament of excessive male ego—win, was like drinking a mug of warm onion beer. Extremely distasteful.

"Yes! Yes! Three deuces, baby! Read'em and weep," Jason bragged, feeding on his own sense of sexist superiority.

Then Hero laid down two more cards. "And just two red aces!"

As quick as Jason's huge grin sprouted, it was swallowed up by a tragic contortion of horror. "NO! You . . . you . . . can't . . . I won . . . I—"

Spider fell into Achilles' arms laughing. Achilles was taken aback a bit by Spider's uncontrollable fit, but then he too was quickly caught up in the moment.

Hero, a wide smirk across her face, leaned over the table and said, "Sorry, Charlie-tuna. You want some of this,"—she waved the money under his nose—"you better come back next pay-day and try and take it. HA!"

Jason fell back into his seat, as if he were struck by a bolt of lightning. He sat silently for several stunned moments. But before long, he smiled. Then laughed, along with everyone else.

The laughter would have continued for several minutes when a thunderous banging reverberated through the room, shaking the station for several nerve-racking seconds.

The laughter stopped.

The lights went out, then came back on.

"All personnel report to the Communications Centre immediately," said a voice over the loud speakers. "Repeat. All personnel report to the Comm. Centre."

In the Communications Centre, Jenna, Michael, and Miles were looking at a large computer view screen. Miles was sitting and punching several buttons on a computer key-pad.

"Have you determined what hit us, Homer?" she asked the computer.

The computer voice came on line. "Negative."

"Can you tell us anything, Homer?" Michael added. "Was it further debris from the mining? Did a chunk of rock come loose and strike the station? How about an iceberg?"

Miles interrupted. "Unlikely. We're over a mile below the surface. A falling piece of rock, ranging from the size of a pea to the Eiffel Tower, would have been I. D.'ed by Homer hours before impact."

"Negative," Homer responded, not letting Miles' answer impede his own. "What hit the outer structure is not consistent with any known configuration."

That caught Jenna by surprise.

The rest of the crew entered the Comm. Centre.

"Jason. Spider. Miles. Suit up," Jenna ordered. "I want you three to check the damage to the station's north wall."

Miles was about to protest, but Spider grabbed him by the arm and dragged him out of his chair.

"The exterior cameras are out. I need you to make a visual observation of the area, Miles," Jenna explained.

Spider and Miles were out the door fast. Jason lagged behind. Unexpectedly, he took Hero by the waist and kissed her.

Upon releasing her he said, "I'm going to get that money back. Count on it." Hero was taken aback, feeling both a sudden surge of rage and astonishment, but before she could say anything, Jason was gone.

Seeing Hero in a mental limbo, Michael took her by the arm and nearly tossed her into the same chair Miles had sat in. "Get with it, Grey. Start re-routing power to the back-up systems and seal off decks A5 through G6."

"Homer. What exactly did you mean by an unknown 'configuration'?" Jenna asked.

"Exterior sensors relate that the northern wall has been struck by a substance of organic origin," Homer replied, unwittingly causing the four remaining people to fall into a deep, eerie silence.

"Organic?" Achilles whispered.

"Affirmative."

Again silence.

"Woe! Cool!" Hero cried.

Jason, Spider, and Miles were outside the comforting walls of Adam 5. Inside their individual robotic constructs, they walked across the base of the ocean bed. Slowly, determined, they made their way along the west wall of the station, heading north. The ocean was unusually dark and dismal. Tiny fragments of dust and ice impaired their visual perceptions. The greenness that once tinted the underwater realm of Europa had become darker and less luminous. It no longer provided an atmosphere of tranquillity and stillness. It was different.

Very different.

Jason was the first to reach the edge of the station, where the west and north walls met. Before going any further, he stopped and turned around, waiting for Spider and Miles to join him.

"What's taking you two so long?" Jason asked over the radio comm. link.

"Something strange about this," Spider replied, feeling a bit eerie.

"Sh—she's right, Jason. Let's go back. I don't like it," Miles said, trying to remain calm. This was particularly tough on Miles.

He hated going outside. This time was no exception.

Jason laughed. "Ha, ha. You always were a bloody chicken, Miles."

As Spider was approaching Jason from behind, he started moving again, and then disappeared around the corner.

"Wait a minute, you idiot!" Spider yelled. "What are you doing?"

Back on Adam 5, Jenna and Michael were monitoring the three. "Get back to your post, Hillerman!" Jenna ordered over the comm. links, almost deafening Spider and Miles. "That's an order! Do you copy?"

here was silence.

"Spider. Miles. Do you copy? What's going on?" Jenna called, hoping that they'd at least respond.

"We copy, sir," Spider said. "Miles and I are fine. I can't see anything. Permission to look around the corner."

Jenna thought for a moment, then replied. "Permission granted. But only look. Jason is out of radio contact, and I don't know if it's a mechanical problem or what."

Spider moved her robotic suit very cautiously. Upon reaching the corner of the west and north wall, she stopped and peered around the corner.

"I don't believe it," she said.

"What is it, Spider?" Jenna asked urgently.

"The whole north side of Adam 5 appears to have been struck by some sort of massive . . . "

At this time, Miles could not stay back any longer. He had to see what was going on. Taking a deep breath, and muttering a short prayer, he positioned himself behind Spider's unit. He saw the same as Spider.

"What is it?" Jenna demanded anxiously.

"A huge . . . skeleton. It appears to be of some long dead sea creature. A huge fossil the size of Madison Square Gardens, sir" Miles stated, feeling a bit relieved.

About a hundred and fifty yards from Spider was Jason. His back was to them and he did not move or respond to any calls.

"Sir, Jason is not responding to my hails; he's not moving either. I think he may be in shock. I'm moving in closer."

Jenna thought for a moment. Then something struck her. Where did that fossil come from? And . . . what if it wasn't a fossil. "Negative, Spider. Do not—"

"Too late, sir," Miles said. "She's already moving. Why shouldn't she—"

Interrupting all of the radio transmissions came Homer's voice. "Rapid movement registered two hundred yards above Adam 5."

"Movement!?" Miles screamed. "Ice chunks? Rocks? What is it? What!?"

"Negative. Movement is moving in a horizontal direction. External scans register biological organisms."

Spider did not hear Homer's warning call and saw no movements at all. As far as she was concerned, all was as it appeared. Still. Calm.

"Sp—Spider! G—Get back here! Something's coming!"

Spider heard Miles just as she reached Jason. "Take it easy, Miles. Everything's okay." She placed her huge metallic hand on Jason's shoulder, and pulled him back.

The suit fell to the ocean bed, breaking in two. A large gaping whole protruded from the suit's middle. Jason was no where in sight.

Spider could just stare. Then, turning about, moved as fast as she could back the way she came.

"Hurry up, Spider! Hurry!"

"Get the hell out of there!" Jenna yelled over Miles' radio.

"Biological organisms are moving in a vertical direction, towards Unit 3," Homer warned.

"That's me!" Miles screamed in panic. "That's me! Help me! Somebody, please help—Oh, my God!! What the hell—ARGHH . . . "

Back on Adam 5, Jenna, Michael, Achilles, and Hero were shocked into silence. They didn't know what was happening. A huge skeleton or fossil? Biological organisms? Impossible. All such tests, probings, and scans done a year ago indicated no life existed. Not one thing. Not even the tiniest of fossils or microscopic organisms was found.

Now a giant skeleton had appeared out of nowhere. And Homer, the stations observatory computer, had detected life.

Achilles pushed his way between Jenna and Michael. He grabbed the radio link microphone and yelled into it, "Spider! What do you see!?"

No response.

"I still haven't been able to restore communications with the north side," Hero said. "Give me another minute.

After a minute. "Yes! Homer. Now, link me up a triangulation with camera 11-A, 17-A, and 34-B."

Hero punched several buttons, and, with the aid of Homer, was able to get a visual on the main view screen.

**On the twenty-foot-by-ten foot screen was the huge remains of a dead oceanic creature. It was about the size of a Humpback Whale, but resembled an underwater prehistoric creature from the Jurassic or Cretaceous period back on Earth. It had a long neck, a round body—the large ribcage was very prominent—four flipper-like appendages, and a long tail bone.**

Everyone was taken aback.

On the twenty-foot-by-ten-foot screen was the huge remains of a dead oceanic creature. It was about the size of a Humpback Whale, but resembled an underwater prehistoric creature from the Jurassic or Cretaceous period back on Earth. It had a long neck, a round body—the large ribcage was very prominent—four flipper-like appendages, and a long tail bone.

It was incredible. And it should have been impossible.

"Spider, do you copy? Spider! Miles! Jason!" Jenna called again, hoping against all odds for a reply.

Nothing.

Three hours passed, and the overall situation had not changed: Miles, Jason, and Spider were missing; a mysterious giant skeleton had damaged the north wall of the station; Homer's unexplainable readings of biological organisms appeared out of nowhere; and, last but not least, Miles' last transmission had sent chills through everyone's bones.

Jenna and Michael were discussing options, trying to formulate a plan. Jenna had sent a Class B1 distress call to Ganymede an hour prior, hoping that if things became completely out of control, they would be able to have some help. Evacuation was not a worry. They still had access to three emergency shuttles.

Jenna, Michael, Achilles, and Hero gathered around the briefing table.

"It's been three hours," Michael started. "We're going to presume that Jason,

**Jenna was in her quarters relaying what she could to Ganymede. Ganymede still agreed to send a shuttle, though it would arrive too late. In the meantime, security measures were minor. Station shutdown was as simple as locking the doors and turning the computers off behind them.**

Miles, and Spider are dead." Achilles was about to interrupt, but Michael refused to let him. "Whatever their situation, we can't do anything for them. The Foreman has sent a B1 distress call to Ganymede. We should receive some aid in about thirty-one hours. We should have nothing to—"

The station suddenly shook from another tremor. This time more intense than the last. The lights flickered on and off, but, after the shaking ended, remained on.

"Homer, what's going on? Don't tell me another skeleton struck the station?" Jenna asked.

"Negative. A hull breach is in progress on levels A through C. Flooding is occurring through levels A through E."

"Hull breach?" Michael inquired incredulously. "From what?"

"Biological organisms," Homer answered in his metallic, unfeeling monotone voice, "have pierced the electro-magnetic shielding, as well as the ultra-titanium walls of the station. Adam 5 has 16 hours and thirty-two minutes before total life support collapse."

Sixteen hours and thirty-two minutes of life.

"Okay, everybody. Get to the shuttles. I'll radio Ganymede about our status and tell them to prepare for our—"

"Sir," Hero interrupted. "Two . . . two of the shuttles are located on levels A and C. We can't get to them."

Damn, was all Jenna could say. "Well, we'll all have to get out on shuttle Freya. It's located on level N. It'll be tight but we should all fit."

Achilles and Hero looked at each other. They became very nervous and uncomfortable.

Achilles cleared his throat and stepped forward. "Hero and I never finished the repairs on it, ma'am. But we could try to now."

Jenna glared at them angrily, and sarcastically said, "You think? I would appreciate that. If it's no trouble, that is."

Swallowing their pride, Achilles and Hero made their way as fast as they could through several levels of the station. When they reached the shuttle pad, they found their tools just where they had left them a week ago. Nothing had been touched at all . . . unfortunately.

Michael was preparing Homer for station shutdown once the shuttle had left orbit. Homer was then to transfer all his functions to the shuttle.

Jenna was in her quarters relaying what she could to Ganymede. Ganymede still agreed to send a shuttle, though it would arrive too late. In the meantime, security measures were minor. Station shutdown was as simple as locking the doors and turning the computers off behind them.

Another tremor shook the station. Parts of Homer's systems began to short out, but most of them had been continually re-routed by Homer personally, in anticipation of such occurrences.

Ten hours until total life support collapse.

The four remaining crew members had gathered at Freya's launch pad.

"How much more time do you need?" Jenna asked.

"At least two hours, sir" Hero replied, wiping the sweat running down her face. "That's plenty though, isn't it?"

Jenna looked at her like she was from another planet, not just on one. Then she noticed that Michael and Achilles were just as relieved. What was with them? Oh, damn.

"Listen up everyone," Jenna began. "To put it simply: Adam 5 has roughly ten hours left. Level N—which we're on—has about—Homer?"

"Flooding and hull breach by biological organisms will occur in two hours and twelve minutes."

That brought the three back to reality. A reality of fright and despair. A reality where death loomed just over the horizon.

Eight hours until total life support collapse.

Twelve minutes until Level N collapse.

"Done!" Hero yelled. "Let's get outta here, pronto!"

Jenna and Michael helmed the pilot and co-pilot seats. Achilles and Hero were seated directly behind them. They were prepared for a ten minute countdown—the minimum for a cold launch.

Suddenly, from the double doors of the launch pad, which led back into the station, came three loud pounding sounds.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The noise echoed throughout the launch pad.

"Homer, is that the organisms?" Jenna asked nervously.

"Negative. Sensors register controlled contact by metallic alloy, consistent with diving units."

"Spider!" Achilles exclaimed. "Let her in."

"Flooding has already begun. We open the doors and we let those things in. We can't," Michael responded.

Achilles protested. "We can't leave her out there."

Jenna knew what she wanted to do, but what she had to do for the sake of the four of them was something else. Their safety was paramount. She knew if she opened the doors, the water would flood in and they would be lucky to close them again. If the creatures weren't right outside the door, they would be soon. Still, she couldn't just . . . her conscience wouldn't allow . . . there was no way . . .

"Damn it! I'm opening the doors!"

Michael took a deep breath, and said, "I hope you know what you're doing, sir."

'So do I,' thought Jenna.

Everyone fastened themselves securely into their seats, except Jenna. She stood at the shuttle's open doors, keeping her eyes on the entrance doors. She looked back at her crew. They were ready.

"Homer. Open the entrance doors," Jenna calmly ordered.

Homer acknowledged, and after a few moments, the heavy metal doors began to slide open. Instantly, ocean water began to pour onto the launch pad. Jenna watched intently as the water level rose. After thirty seconds of water rushing in, a huge robotic diving unit finally swept through the doors and onto the launch pad. It was Spider's unit.

"Homer! Close the doors!" Jenna yelled.

Homer complied. The doors quickly closed, and the water ceased to pour in. Spider's unit walked toward the shuttle, knee

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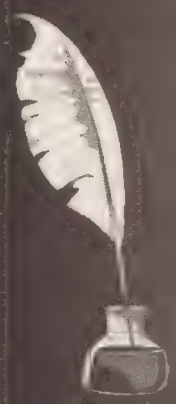

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deep in Europa's ocean water.

Jenna started down the shuttle's side. Half way down, she called out, "Spider! Get out of your suit! We're leaving Adam 5!"

Spider stopped and took off the suit's helmet. She was covered in old and new sweat. Her long hair was stringy, clinging to her glistening face like lines of wet paint. "I thought I was dead. Those things! They nearly had me twice!" she exclaimed as she removed the suit.

As she was about to jump into the water and swim the mere twenty feet left, something in the water bumped her diving unit's right leg. Spider froze.

Jenna saw Spider's sudden change. Then she saw movement in the water, directly in front of Spider. It swam through the water like an eel, but appeared to be at least forty feet in length and about two feet in diameter. It had no head, or at least none could be seen.

Then, to Spider's and Jenna's horror, it split into two snake like creatures. Then three. Then four. Four of these creatures now swam around Spider.

"Get out of here!" Spider yelled. "These things split apart just before they strike! Go!"

She grabbed for a knife she always carried at her side. Pulling out the six-inch blade she readied herself to jump.

Jenna wanted to go after her. To help her. But she knew there was nothing she could do. She also knew that there was nothing she could say to talk Spider out of her decision. When Spider made up her mind, no request or order could change it.

Jenna started to race back up the shuttle. Beneath her, she could hear the swimming motions of the alien creature. It was getting nearer. She glanced over her shoulder just as it launched itself from the water—directly for her.

Gripping the shuttle's ladder she climbed with all her strength, Jenna screamed in terror.

**She grabbed for a knife she always carried at her side. Pulling out the six-inch blade she readied herself to jump.**

At that precise moment, Spider leaped out of her diving unit. With her knife in hand, she struck the alien in mid-air. Immediately, she began cutting and slashing at it. Long, cylindrical chunks of the creature fell away from its cut sections. No blood of any kind spilled from it. Whatever it was, no fluids ran through its serpentine body.

Jenna made it to the safety of the shuttle, thanks to Spider's timely and self-sacrificing interception. Before closing the door behind her, she couldn't help but look back. She had to see what happened to Spider. She saw a huge-like tentacle drag Spider beneath the surface of the flooded deck. Soon, the murky green water began to flow dark brown and red. Then all four of the serpentine aliens converged on the bloody spill, in a festive orgy of gore and horror.

Spider was not returning.

Jenna closed and locked the shuttle doors. The engines ignited as the launch doors opened. Once the entire launching pad was flooded and the pressure was equalized, the shuttle Freya left the ground, and mining station Adam 5.

Whatever those creatures were, wherever they came from, and why they appeared, along with that skeleton, no one knew for sure. Homer, however, theorized that the explosive mining may have freed the aliens from a long sleep. But this was just a theory. No signs of life had been found during early scans and probing of Europa, so anything was possible.

Was the skeleton, before being killed, living underground? Homer had determined that the skeleton was a recently living creature, resembling a pre-historic amphibian dinosaur.

Whatever really happened on Adam 5 would have to remain a mystery, until Earth sent another series of probes and scanners to observe the ice covered satellite. Assuming, of course, that it would be profitable to do so.

☆


The Parsec Gang has invaded Sudbury's radio waves

**Into the Void**

# The Sacrifice

Story by
*Melissa J. Yuan*
Art by
*Susanne Gaudin*

Peter sliced off another piece of his I-can't-believe-it's-not-steak!, issuing the occasional understanding murmur while his mind wandered. He already knew what he'd have to say. Mark's story was sounding more familiar by the minute.

". . . so then I realized that Laura just might be The One.

No kidding, Pete. I mean, she's smart, she's beautiful, and she loves my children already. I even like that she's a touch old fashioned. She makes me feel old fashioned, like I want to pop the question and carry her off into the sunset! But the thing is, Pete . . ." — he leaned forward, the earnestness in his eyes making Peter wince — ". . . I don't know how she feels about me. I'm sure she likes me, even if she doesn't come out and say so. She always gives me a big smile, touches me a lot, you know how it is. But real, deep emotion? 'Thanks, Mark. I always have a good time with you.' That's her at her most heartfelt." He threw up his hands.

Peter added some more sauce to his plate. "Maybe you're holding back, and she senses it, so she—"

"No. I tell her things. I'd tell her anything, and I think she knows it."

"Well, then maybe you're going too fast, confessing your entire life story before she's ready."

"No." Mark's voice was firm. "I've dated a lot of women, Pete. I know every one is different, but I think I'm at the point where I can sense what's too much, too soon."

Peter hesitated. "I hate to say it, but there is one other thing."

"What?"

"Your children."

Mark sighed and shook his head. "We already talked about it. She said she respected that my biological clock was ticking and that I was strong-willed enough to go through with raising kids on my own. She thought about it herself, at one point. Anyway, like I said, I think she really likes them. She doesn't say much, but I think she does."

"All right. Let me think for a minute." Peter sipped his water as he tried to pick the most tactful way to put this. The silence grew. Mark waited, still hopeful but getting more and more edgy. At long last, Peter spoke.

"Well, Mark," he said kindly, "it sounds like she's holding back."

"I know she's holding back!" Mark burst out. "Good God, Pete, do you actually charge people for that kind of insight?"

Since his friend was obviously upset, Peter ignored the blasphemy and waited for him to simmer down. Which Mark did eventually. "Now. As I was saying, she's holding back. It may or may not be conscious. You said she was an old-fashioned sort of woman, right?"

Mark looked mildly puzzled, but he nodded.

"Then I think she wants the one thing you haven't been giving her." He paused, then said it plainly.

"The sacrifice."

Mark's mouth worked. He closed his eyes and made an obvious effort to control himself.

"No," he whispered.

"I know that it'd be harder for you than most. You've never done it before, have you? But maybe that's why she wants it."

Mark's nostrils flared. "I can't believe it. I don't believe it. Why would she want me to kill a—no, a slew—of living creatures for her?"

"Ah, Mark. There are lots of theories. Maybe because her father did it for her mother. Maybe because it means you will, and have, killed for her. Maybe because those things are just beautiful and nice to have around, while they last.

Or maybe because women used to be powerless ornaments and now they enjoy seeing others in that position." He shrugged. "No one really knows."

Mark said nothing. His hands twisted the napkin in front of him.

For once, Peter felt a rush of genuine sympathy. He made his voice gentle. "There are other women out there, you know. Ones who don't need, or want, the sacrifice. And there are more of them every year."

"But they're not Laura." His voice was flat.

"No. They are not." Peter bent to clean his plate and didn't look up until he wiped his mouth. "So it's up to you to decide if you can't live without Laura, or if you can't live with the sacrifice. Good luck."

❑❑❑

The next time he saw Laura, they went to a movie. Mark couldn't stop looking at her out of the corner of his eye.

Her hair, falling in soft, full waves. Her brow furrowing as she tried to solve the murder mystery on screen. Her lips curving in a sweet smile when he took her hand. How could she want the sacrifice? Why would old fashioned women, reputedly the most tender-hearted, want it the most?

No, he decided. She couldn't. Not Laura. So when they went to her apartment afterward, he felt quite sure that the gift-wrapped package he held was what she really wanted. When she returned from "freshening up," he held it behind his back.

"I've got something for you."

Her eyes lit up. "Mark. You shouldn't have," she breathed, walking toward him.

He whipped out the package and placed it in her hands.

She stopped, looking down at the flat, rectangular shape.

"Oh." Was that faint disappointment shading her voice? But she looked up with a smile, then unwrapped it with clever fingers.

She stood still. "A picture. Thank you." She gave him a quick kiss.

"Do you like it?" he asked hesitantly.

"It's . . . very nice." She flashed him a smile and began looking around. "I'll have to find a place to put it."

With a sinking heart, he watched her. "A lot of women like it when someone brings them the real thing. But I thought maybe you'd like seeing some in their natural habitat. You know, like, shoot with a camera, not with a gun."

"Oh, Mark. You'd hardly need a gun." Her laugh was brittle. "Here. I'll prop it up by the table." She did.

"Now. Could I get you something to drink?"

He felt latent stubbornness well up. "Only if we sit by the picture."

She cast him a surprised glance. "Fair enough."

He brooded, his eyes fixed on the picture. She returned a few minutes later, coffee in hand. "I know you like cream and sugar, but how much caffeine would you like today?"

"Lots." He was going to need it.

She stirred it in. Seeing his eyes move to the picture again, she paused and looked at it.

"Do you like it?" he asked again, an edge to his voice.

She smiled slightly and handed him the coffee. "It reminds me of my father. He'd sneak out in the dead of night, when most of the activists were asleep, and he'd bring dozens of those things home for my mother."

"Didn't it bother him?"

"What?"

"That they died after he brought them home?"

She shrugged a little, her eyes bright. "Maybe. But everything has to die eventually. And he did love my mother."

"I see." Abruptly, he pushed the coffee away. He couldn't drink it.

❑❑❑

A week later, Mark, too, was outside in the dead of night. He prowled through the forest with a lamp in hand. It would have been much easier to sacrifice some on his own land, but he couldn't. That was too close to home. Eventually he stumbled on a group of them standing quite tall, with their inimitable grace. No. Don't think about them like that.

They're as common as . . . as grass. His breath escaped in a hollow laugh. Come on. They're not sentient. At least, that hasn't been proven. But for a moment more, he hesitated. Would one be enough? He didn't want to kill more than one. But was it worse for them to die alone?

Quit anthropomorphizing them, Mark, he told himself sternly. They don't feel. They don't think. They're. Not. Human.

He grabbed a hold of several and started hacking at their beautiful forms with a knife. He watched his hands' work with deadened fascination. Everything has to die eventually . . .

❑❑❑

She loved them. She flat out loved them. She found a pretty container to hold them, positioned them so that her guests couldn't help but see them, went to the black market for special food to add to their water, and often stroked their contours with a gentle finger.

At first, they looked so healthy, Mark could almost convince himself they were going to live. Somehow. They were so very beautiful.

But by the end of the week, it was impossible not to see their limpness, their faded colour, the dark edges of decay, the desiccated parts that flaked off faster than Laura could skillfully glue them back on.

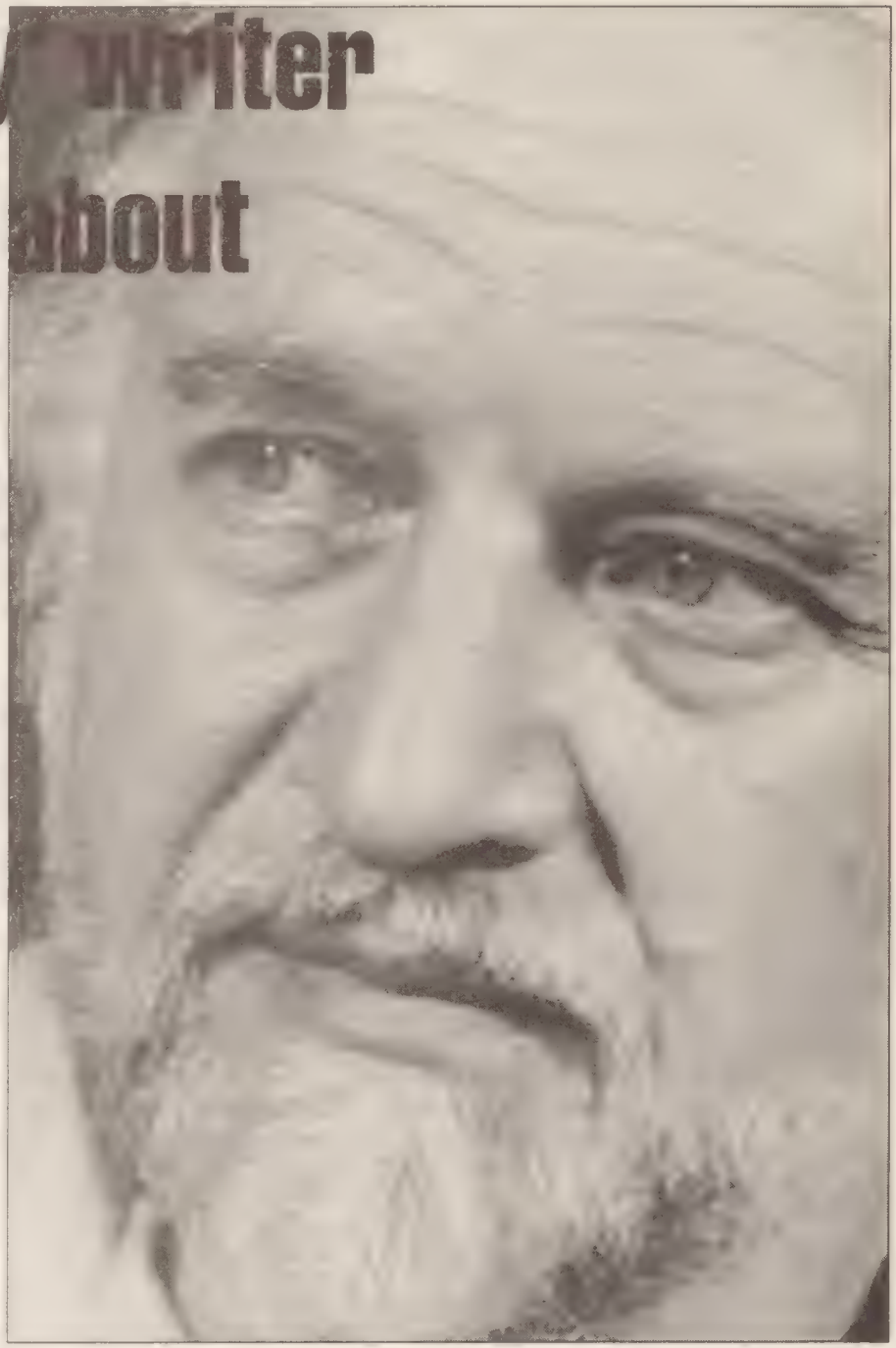
When Mark came to visit, and even when he didn't, he was haunted by the sight of slow death. Of the three daisies he'd sacrificed. For Laura.

*Dedicated to Matt Innes*

☆

# 'Legendary' writer complains about Hollywood treatment

By
GREGG CHAMBERLAIN



Richard Matheson has been less than pleased with the way Hollywood has adapted his novel, I Am Legend, to the screen.

Richard Matheson made one telling remark about the past treatment of his novel, I am Legend, at the hands of Hollywood. The book had already been through two adaptations before Tracy Tormé obtained the rights to do a third.

"It (the book) has yet to go through a first time as far as I'm concerned," Matheson said. He's never been happy with either of the two previous adaptations.

"They missed it," Matheson said of the first version, starring Vincent Price and produced by an Italian film company, It was close to the original story but suffered from poor production values. As for the second version starring Charlton Heston and retitled The Omega Man, Matheson only has one thing to say.

"That was so far from the book as to be virtually unrecognizable."

He recalls being angry when the novel was reissued in paperback to coincide with the Heston movie's release. It featured The Omega Man on the front cover with the book's original title in smaller letters underneath.

The book was written in the early '50s with the story set in the latter half of the '70s. It dealt with a world devastated by a mysterious pandemic. The plague germ proves to be the basis for the vampire legend because in certain cases it alters the survivors' genetic structure, making them susceptible to sunlight and giving them a driving thirst for fresh blood.

Also some humans who didn't die from the disease have been driven insane and believe they too have become vampires, although the actually weren't.

The lead character in the novel, Robert Neville, has proven immune to the plague and endures a solitary life, hunting vampires, both real and false, by day and hiding from them in his fortress/home by night, .I am Legend is considered a science fiction classic. Given its treatment by the movie industry in the past, some might wonder why Matheson would risk a

third adaptation. But the decision wasn't entirely his to make.

Matheson sold the film rights with the first project. Since then, the rights to I Am Legend have gotten tangled up in legal red tape — which may explain how the Heston version turned out. Matheson noted that lots of interested parties have tried, without success, to sort through the legal snarls and get the film rights. At one point, even Orson Welles was considering making the attempt. But nothing ever came of his interest.

Tormé managed to get everything unravelled. Matheson, who is still active in television and film scriptwriting, was talking to Tormé at one point about Sliders. Tormé mentioned that he had obtained the film rights to I Am Legend and planned to produce a new adaptation of the book.

"I hope it turns out well," Matheson said.

He recalls mentioning to Tormé that he hoped the third version would follow the book.

If anyone does, Matheson would have good reason to be pessimistic about the success rate Hollywood has had at adapting science fiction works. He doesn't even give the major movie studios a 50-percent success rate.

"You can count on the fingers of one hand the number of really outstanding works in either category (film or television)," said Matheson.

He does list Fire in the Sky — an adaptation of The Walton Experience — as one of the few good science fiction he's seen.

"It had in it what I think is the most terrifying scene in any movie," Matheson says in reference to the scene where the kidnapping victim awakens in the interior of the starship. Tormé wrote the screenplay for Fire in the Sky and was one of the movie's producers.

Matheson's only regret regarding the current I Am Legend project is that he would have liked to work on the screenplay.

He wrote the book over a two-and-a-half-month period in 1953. In the end, Matheson had written the first science fiction novel ever to deal with the topic of vampirism.

"When I was a teen, I saw Dracula," Matheson explains. "I thought 'if one vampire was scary, what about a whole world of vampires?'."

He is especially proud of providing in the novel a science-based explanation for how and why vampires might exist and function.

Matheson stressed that he never had

# Tormé makes latest adaptation attempt

**I Am Legend has not yet seen a truly successful adaptation to the silver screen despite the fact that it is considered one of science fiction's classic works.**

**Matheson, a legend in the genre, wrote the first story to treat the vampire myth from a science fiction viewpoint. The result was I Am Legend. Now Tracy Tormé, has embarked on a labor of love to give Matheson's novel the respect it deserves on the silver screen.**

**"The book is considered one of the all-time classics," Tormé said from his California office. Tormé has an agreement with Warner Bros. to produce a film version of Matheson's novel for the big screen in 1997.**

**Given that I Am Legend has already been adapted as a movie before, why would Tormé (who has a host of other projects on the go already, bother doing a remake of it?)**

**"It was never done anywhere close to correctly," Tormé explained. On a purely technical note, Tormé remarked that The Omega Man portrayed the creatures more as "nocturnal zombies" than the vampires ceased as a result of a global plague. He considers the Italian version starring Vincent Price as a fairly close adaptation, but one which suffered from a low production budget.**

**"For all intents and purposes, it's like doing the book for the first time," Torme said.**

**His plans for Matheson's novel will see a more faithful adaptation —though there will be some updating of the setting for the new version.**

**With Tormé's background in speculative fiction, a natural questions is "Why not just write your own sci•fi/vampire movie instead of doing another adaptation?"**

**"Matheson is probably the best writer in the genre that's ever lived," Tormé explained. "and he wrote a brilliant book."**

**To Tormé, it would be dishonest to produce a sci•fi/vampire movie without acknowledging Matheson as the inspiration. He would rather see that I Am Legend finally gets a proper screen treatment.**

**"I think it's a totally unique vampire story," Tormé explained and noted that the novel reverses one of the usual plot devices of a vampire story — where the undead, acting either alone or in a small band, preys on the human majority, while, at the same time, being on the run from vampire hunters. I Am Legend has the vampire hunters. I Am Legend has the vampires as the rulers of the world and Neville as the hunted majority of one.**

**The book also offers a convincing explanation of how vampires might have evolved and how they might function. Tormé consulted with Matheson soon after an agreement was reached with all parties involved in the movie project.**

**"I think he also believes it's one of his better works," Tormé said, "and he would like to see something done closer to the original than what's been done so far."**

**Some of the novel's strengths that Tormé wants to bring to the screen are the exploration of the themes of loneliness, personal survival and faith.**

**"There's this one man who's watched the whole world change," Tormé said. "He's learning to have courage to trust again."**

**Alone and psychologically isolated, haunted by his own memories of the world that was, Neville soldiers on while at the same time trying to avoid being caught by the creatures of the night who have inherited the Earth from humanity.**

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any hidden agenda in mind when he wrote I Am Legend. He just wanted to explore an interesting idea. He noted that it still has stopped people from reading more into the book than he wrote.

"Since then, many people have found an underlying theme," he observes. "All novels, if they last long enough, people find interesting things in them."

Even now, after more than 40 years, I Am Legend holds no special significance for Matheson.

"It was just another book I wrote."

Matheson had even re-read the book when a special anniversary edition of it was released a few years ago. He was pleased to note that I Am Legend still reads well, in his opinion, after so many years.

"I'm glad it's lasted as long as it has."

Matheson's writing career in science fiction officially started with the publication of a short story, Born of Man and Woman, in the then-newly established Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction in 1950. During his early career, most of Matheson's shorter sci•fi works appeared in the pages of either F&SF or in Galaxy magazine during H.L. Gold's tenure as its editor. Some of Matheson's short stories were adapted for EC Comics' weird Fantasy title during the early 1950s.

Matheson was one of the regular contributors to the original Twilight Zone series and is still part of Hollywood's screenwriting scene. He and his son, Richard Matheson Jr., have recently sold a screenplay entitled Midvale to Universal.

The script deals with the topic of carrying on with life after the death of a loved one.

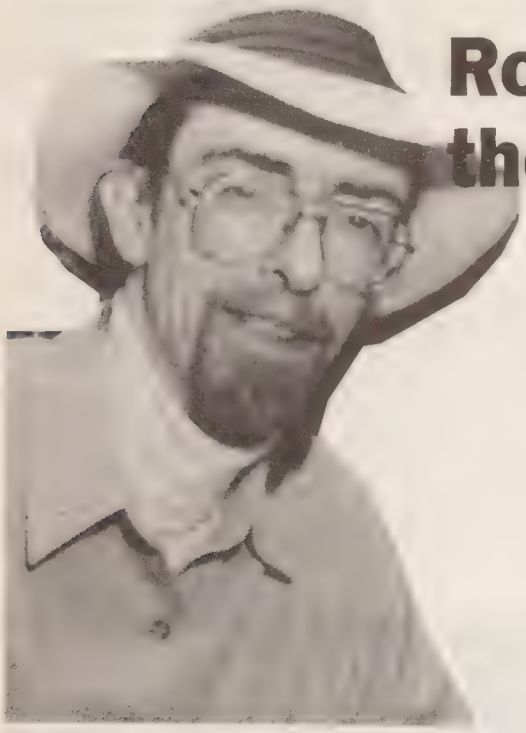
Another of Matheson's works, What Dreams May Come, deals with the other side of life after death and has been picked up by MGM (based on a script by Ron Bass) for possible release in 1997.

Among his current projects, Matheson is working on another novel and also the script for a suspense play. He hasn't been doing too much sci•fi lately. But he hasn't forgotten the part it played in his development as a writer.

"I'm not too concerned with fantasy and science fiction though I've always liked it," he says.

"I'll always have a warm place in my heart for it."

☆



# Robinson brings forth the Book of Elvis

*Only the vaunted author can write a trilogy from the middle out*

**Lifehouse, Spider Robinson, Baen Books (paperback original), New York City, N.Y.**

Spider Robinson has an unfair advantage over most other sci-fi writers. He is so damn good at doing readings of his own stuff. And he knows it, has to, otherwise why, during V-Con 22, would he choose to read to an enraptured room full of fans, not the first but the second chapter of his latest book?

A chapter which concerns how two Secret Masters of Fandom, currently involved in planning Vancouver's latest science-fiction convention, believe they have lucked out in realizing the dream of every sf fan in the world? Meeting an actual, dyed-in-the-wool, bonafide Time Traveller.

But things are not always what they appear to be in Robinson's world.

Lifehouse is a prequel, of sorts, to Mindkiller which was the first novel Robinson wrote in what has now turned out to be a trilogy, kind of, which begins with Time Pressure, which he wrote several years after Mindkiller was published but before he'd gotten around to thinking about Lifehouse. And, by the way, Mindkiller started with a short story written for Omni which was later included in the Time Travellers Strictly Cash anthology of Callahan shorts.

Clear? Good. Only Spider Robinson can write a trilogy bassackwards and make it work. Even as the middle part of a trilogy, Lifehouse stands on its own in superb style as Robinson rounds out his his exploration of the theme of life, death and what comes next against the background of the final week or two preceding a sf convention. He also tosses in a short speculative discussion on the hitherto unknown yet ongoing war between the forces of the Church of Elvis and those True Believers in the gospel according to John, Paul, George and Ringo.

One of the most enjoyable parts of the novel to me, is Robinson's gentle poke at the conceit of intelligent people using a veteran con artist duo, a couple of SMOFs, and a pair of time-travelling immortals as hilarious and endearing examples.

*— Gregg Chamberlain*

❑❑❑

***Shadow Dawn, Chris Claremont & George Lucas, Bantam, Spectra, 415 pages, hardcover***

With the pedigree sported by the two authors, (Claremont wrote the novel based on a Lucas Story) it's hard to believe that Shadow Dawn could be a stinker.

But it is.

Perhaps the pedigree of the authors provides too high an expectation and the reader sees anything less than perfect as a failure. Claremont, after all, penned the famous run of the X-Men comic book series and Lucas, well there's no need to expound further on his accomplishments.

But the fruits of their collaboration was bitter.

In Shadow Dawn, Elora Danan and her allies flee to the city state on Sandeni. Hot on their heels are the forces of the Black Rose — assassins dispatched by the leader of the Thunder Riders, Mohdri.

But Mohdri, as it turns out, doesn't exist. In reality, he is a facade for the Deceiver. According to prophesy, the Deceiver must capture Danan in order to realize his goals.

Denan's friends must protect her from the Deceiver and she must unlock the puzzle to his scheme and thwart him.

If you're looking for a little depth in your fantasy, Shadow Dawn is not the book for you.

It is little more than a transient fantasy — no substance and simply a tome dedicated to the stereotypical fantasy quests.

*— Lars Johansen*

❑❑❑

***New York City, N.Y. Jackal Bird, Michael Barley, Tesseract Books, Edmonton, 298 pages, paperback***

A first novel for any sci-fi writer is a big step. A first novel

that generally ignores Earth and focuses entirely on an alien planet and successfully treats the native culture there as a familiar thing is a major accomplishment.

Perhaps the credit for Vancouver writer Michael Barley's ability to do so in his book, Jack Bird, is due to his background as an architect. Certainly the world of Isurus, as viewed through the eyes of the three main characters in the book, is as fully realized and believable a world as it is possible for a first novelist to build.

The book is divided into three parts: Jackal Bird, Pangaelene, and Illusions of Grace. All are self-contained pieces by themselves and they work together well to depict the trials the centuries-old colony world of Isura is going through as a civil war rages between a military dictator, an underground resistance movement and the rest of the independent nations.

The first part of the book, Jackal Bird, deals with a group of children involved in reliving an old rebellion through a series of complex war games until several of them discover an outlawed laser rifle. Pangaelene takes place several decades later and looks at the resistance movement set up against the dictator, who was one of the children organizing the war games in Jackal Bird. Another of the children, who also took part in the games and who leads the resistance, finds herself fighting a secret war on two fronts as she struggles to keep the movement from being used by an ally to fulfill his own dreams of power. In Illusion of Grace, yet a third member of the war games group looks at Isura after returning to the planet of his birth from a century-long starship voyage and searches for some sign of the home world he remembers while ghosts from his past follow him with their own plans in mind.

*— Gregg Chamberlain*

❑❑❑

***Black Wine, Candas Jane Dorsey, TOR/Tom Doherty Associates Book. New York City, N.Y.***

This is a good book though it isn't an easy read. Anyone who has other works by Jane Dorsey, like Her Machine Sex collection of short stories, knows that the Edmonton writer has a style that is unique. But it's worth the effort to get used to her manner of writing because Dorsey's interesting take on traditional themes.

In Black Wine, one of the societies described in the book is extremely barbaric in a despotic sort of way.

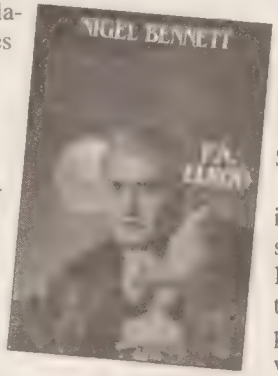
Black Wine looks at this strange world from the alternating viewpoints of three women who are all related to each other, almost as though Dorsey is invoking the old Earth religion view of the Goddess as Maid, Mother and Matriarch. Fair warning, though, the family ties won't be obvious until you are well into the book. Also, don't try reading Black Wine in one sitting. This is one book best contemplated over several days, allowing you to fully absorb the story.

*— Gregg Chamberlain*

❑❑❑

***Keeper of the King, Nigel Bennett & P.N.Elrod, Baen, New York City, N.Y., 400 pages***

In Keeper of the King, Bennett and Elrod seek to capitalize on Bennett's relationship to vampires (from his Forever Knight role). It works, although you'd be hard-pressed not to visualize Lacroix as you're reading about the exploits of Richard Dun.




In Keeper of the King, Dun must track down the assassin brought in to kill the prime minister, as well as find the Holy Grail so that he may cure his beloved Lady Sabra before she dies from a mysterious ailment.

Along the way he must cope with nosy Mounties, bureaucrats, an Irish bounty hunter and another vampire who is more than a tad vicious. But even with the challenge of keeping his Forever Knight character at bay, Bennett and Elrod (the pair's exact contribution is a mystery) manage to provide an entertaining read.

Keeper of the King may not be a truly unique take on the vampire legend, but it is a fun and quick-paced work nonetheless.

*— Chris Krejlgaard*

❑❑❑

***Dragonseye, Anne McCaffrey, DelRey/Ballantine Books (hardcover). New York City, N.Y.***

Thirty years ago, the October issue of Analog featured Weyr Search by Anne McCaffrey. In a magazine known for hard-tech science fiction, a story starring dragons seemed out of place, especially since no real explanation was given for their existence and the only actual sci-fi element seemed to be the psionic gifts of the female lead character.

But the story was accepted, printed and the world of sf hasn't been the same since. After that long-ago issue in Analog, McCaffrey has penned 13 Dragons of Pern books, including the Harper's Hall trilogy of excellent and now hard-to-find juvenile novels. The world of Pern has been firmly set in the Rukbat system of the Sagitarrian sector of space, its early colonization attempt outlined along with the unforeseen tragedy that nearly destroyed the would-be settlers of the third planet and an explanation given for the origin of dragons and dragonriders.

Dragonseye (Del Rey) is the latest book in the series and it's a worthy celebration of McCaffrey's 30 years of chronicling Pern. The novel explores an untouched and, in some ways, dark period in the planet's history dealing with preparations for the return of the Red Star and the Second Fall.

One thing that gave me great pleasure is a small change in McCaffrey's writing style in which more of her United Kingdom heritage becomes apparent through the use of colloquial English phrases like "gob-struck" and "pong" which any regular watcher of Britcoms on television should recognize.

*— Gregg Chamberlain*

❑❑❑

***The Soprano Sorceress, TOR, L.E. Modesitt, Jr. Tor Books. New York City, N.Y.***

Ann Marshal, a trained singer and music instructor, suddenly finds herself transported against her will across the dimensions to Erde, a world where magic works. But only those who are gifted singers can perform magic and only a few who can also write songs and visualize what their spell-songs should do are able to perform sorcery which can call down the lightning itself.

With her abilities, Marshal has the potential to the greatest magic worker of all, if she chooses to. Which is the problem. In her own world, Anna's life never seemed to be her own to live. She sacrificed her own stage career so that her prima donna opera singer of an ex-hus-

band could excel in his. Then her position as a music instructor seemed flat because of university politics. She'd endured what seemed the worst that life could throw at her until she arrived on Erde, unable to return to her own world and her children, and a target for every faction seeking total power.

That provides the final push needed to transform Marshal from just being a survivor, to being a fighter, determined to use her abilities to protect her adopted world.

L.E. Modesitt's writing is smooth as a lullaby. One of the real treats was seeing a writer handle one aspect of fantasy world development, which is often overlooked — how does a novice magician figure out spell-making? I'm looking forward to the next installment in Modesitt's new series.

***— Gregg Chamberlain***

❑❑❑

***The Gates of Twilight, Paula Volsky, Bantam Spectra (paperback). New York City, N.Y.***

Rudyard Kipling meets Sax Rohmer in a wonderfully fantastic setting. That sums up Paula Volsky's latest work, The Gates of Twilight, a novel of two cultural solitudes in collision; a real pleasure to read.

Renille vo Chaumelle, a civil servant posted to the Vonarhr Republic's occupation forces in Aveshq, and Jathondi, heir to the Ivory Throne of Aveshq, find themselves caught up in the whirlwind of native rebellion and a bloodthirsty cult's dark intrigues.

One of the most appealing features of this novel is Volsky's borrowing from the various attitudes, both native and foreign, that existed in India when that country was " the jewel in the crown of the British Empire" before the locals kicked out their English overlords. On one side we have the Vonarhr, who favor logic and science and who also espouse republican ideals like freedom and equality except for those living in countries subject to Vonarhrish rule. On the other side there are the Aveshquians, a languid, mystical people of many gods whose philosophy of submission to authority makes it hard for them to unite long enough to throw out their usurpers.

Hard, but not impossible, as the Sons of Aoun the Hungry God prove. And this is when things start to get very interesting.

***— Gregg Chamberlain***

❑❑❑

***Deception Well, Linda Nagata, Bantam Spectra (paperback). New York City, N.Y.***

This one's a honey. Locus Award-winner Linda Nagata's latest novel, Deception Well , is set so far in the future that Earth isn't even a faded memory. Humankind has spread throughout the galaxy.

Nanotechnology has provided longevity of a kind that people who are less than a couple hundred years old are considered adolescents. One of the best things about Nagata's writing is the almost effortless way she makes nanotech biological enhancements seem so natural.

Jupiter Apolinario, messianic leader of a band of refugees, tries to lead his people to the surface of the world known as Deception Well where he promises they will find paradise in a state of physical and spiritual communion. The inhabitants of the orbital platform city of Silk, though, believe Deception Well is a hell planet breeding alien viral plagues.

Jupiter's exodus attempt fails, leaving behind his son Lot, on the platform along with the remaining refugees who didn't make the journey. Now it's 10 years later and everyone, including friends and enemies, expect Lot to fulfill his father's dream.

***— Gregg Chamberlain***

❑❑❑

*Trader, Charles de Lint, Tor/Tom Doherty Associates Book. New York City, N.Y.*

Trader (Tor) is the latest book which demonstrates, without a shadow of a doubt, why Charles de Lint is one of the masters of contemporary fantasy.

Max Trader is a luthier, a maker of guitars, and his creations fetch a high price because of the love and craftsmanship that goes into making them. He wakes up one morning and finds a stranger's face staring at him out of a mirror.

As one character in Trader observes, the body-switching gimmick has been done, a lot, mostly as a comedy plot device. But there's nothing funny about how de Lint handles the idea. Max's quest to regain his own body becomes a journey of self-discovery, which reaches from the city of Newford to the otherworld where the manitous and other less familiar things dwell.

The common thread that ties everything together in this novel is responsibility, recognition and acceptance. Responsibility for oneself, and especially for one's own actions and how they affect ourselves and others.

***— Gregg Chamberlain***

❑❑❑

***Tek Money, William Shatner, Ace paperback. New York City, N.Y.***

The seventh novel in William Shatner's TekWar series, Tek Money, takes a darker turn compared to the previous books. This time Jake Cardigan and Gomez end up in Spain on the trail of an illegal weapons smuggling operation with connections to a rebel movement and the Spanish Tek cartel.

Cardigan seems more cynical than ever as he continues to mourn the death of his beloved Beth Kittridge at the hands of the Teklords. Gomez also finds little to joke about as he encounters the Spanish government's "final solution" to the problem of poverty.

The TekWar books offer a quick, easy read with lots of action. A nice change of pace from some of the heavier sci-fi novels on the market.

***— Gregg Chamberlain***

❑❑❑

***A Darker Geometry, Mark O. Martin and Gregory Benford, Baen Books (paperback). New York City, N.Y.***

Set in Larry Niven's Known Space universe, A Darker Geometry, is a decent read. Part of the novel first appeared in volume 7 of the Man-Kzin Wars series, in which Niven has graciously opened the borders of Known Space to exploration by other writers.

In Darker Geometry, Mark O. Martin and Gregory Benford track the adventures of Kzin-war veteran Captain Carol Faulk and cybernetically-enhanced Bruno Takagama. Their original black ops mission, to deliver a genetic super weapon to the Kzin-besieged human colony on Wunderland in the Alpha Centauri system, becomes a roller-coaster encounter with marauding remnants of the Kzin Third Fleet, sweet-singing Puppeteers with hidden agendas, Outsider zealots seeking to extinguish all warmlife from the galaxy and a strange extra-dimensional race intent on moving into our universe.

# *DAVE SIM. . .*

# Putting the 'Self' back in self-publishing

*Photos by Janet L. Hetherington; Cerebus © Dave Simm and Gerhard*

**Although Dave Sim is best known for his creation Cerebus, he has been a tireless worker on behalf of the Comic Book Legal Defence Fund.**

*In an industry filled with costumed superheroes, an aardvark battles on to make room for himself*

**By**
**JANET L. HETHERINGTON**

The little gray aardvark with a helmet, sword, chainmail and a fiesty attitude may, at first glance, seem an unlikely Canadian hero. His name is Cerebus, and with more than 200 adventures published to date by creator/publisher Dave Sim, Cerebus is the star of Canada's longest-running comic book.

But Cerebus' stories are often more profound than merely comic, and they have garnered Sim a loyal readership and international acclaim.

"What I'm trying to do with Cerebus is actually document a life, with all of the ins and outs attached to it," Sim explains.

"The fact that the main character is a funny animal in the world of humans. It's become far more a shorthand for alienation. I think that the physical impact of how Cerebus looks, and being disassociated from all of the goings-on in the environment — coupled with the fact that he tends to go through the same things that everyone else goes through — I hope that sort of mirrors my own impression of what our society is like."

Beyond the popularity of Cerebus itself, Sim has also earned a world-wide reputation as an outspoken advocate for free speech and the merits of self-publishing.

In 1996, he was honoured with a Defenders of Liberty award by the the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF), a US-based organization dedicated to fighting censorship and other legal

actions, and supporting creators' rights. Executive Director of the CBLDF, Susan Alston, says that during the past three years Sim has contributed some $125,000 to CBLDF, including $113,000 from his share of the profits from the Cerebus/Spawn cross-over comic book.

"He is constantly generous," Alston says.

Similarly, Sim has supported Canada's Comics Legends Legal Defense Fund, appearing in two benefit comic books, True North I and II. He has also sought to educate self-publishers through written material as well as by organizing the Spirits of Independence tour, which brought independent comics creators together for one-day shows in various cities across Canada and the United States in 1995.

While Sim rejects the notion that he is "the Father of self-publishing" ("That's one of the misapprehensions that you can't avoid, because it tends to feed the collectivist dynamic," he says), he remains steadfast in his support of independent publishers. "What I'm working on, and what I'm concerned about, is trying to emphasize as much as possible the individualizing of cartoonists," comments Sim. "I think that self-publishing is one of the best vehicles for that, because you only have your own demons to wrestle with. If something's not going well with your self-publishing effort, there's only one person to blame, because you have absolute control."

### The Origin

Sim decided to pursue self-publishing in December, 1977, setting up Aardvark-Vanaheim Inc. in Kitchener, Ont.

"I had an affection for comic books, and had some experience working on a freelance basis doing illustrations and comic strips for newspapers, fanzines, small press comic books, that kind of thing," Sim says.

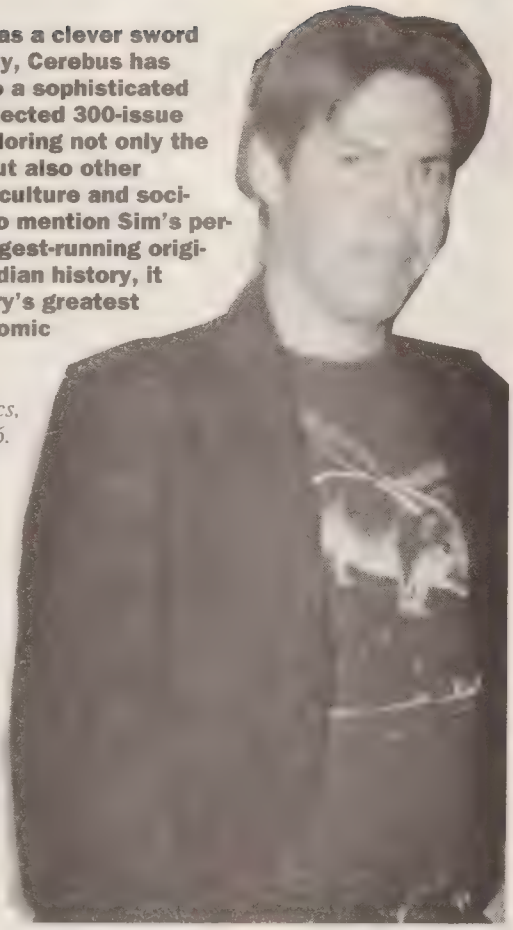
"One of my problems was dealing with editors, and consequently, I decided to try something on my own and pay the printing bill and see if there was any commercial possibility with it at all. If it was a failure, then I could just go back to the same freelance life that I had and stop complaining about editors I had."

As it turned out, Sim's black-and-white self-published comic book about a barbarian aardvark named Cerebus proved a hit with readers and critics alike. In 1984, Sim received a Kirby Award for best black-and-white comic book, and in 1991, he received a Harvey Award for Best Cartoonist.

Even in an unstable comics marketplace, Cerebus has managed to maintain steady sales.

**"Though it began as a clever sword and sorcery parody, Cerebus has since evolved into a sophisticated work of art, a projected 300-issue graphic novel exploring not only the comics medium but also other facets of popular culture and society at large, not to mention Sim's personal life. The longest-running original comic in Canadian history, it may be the country's greatest achievement in comic art."**

*— Canuck Comics, 1986.*



"It's been up and down over the course of history," Sim admits. "Certainly, the last time that the comic book field experienced an explosion of growth when Image came along, the first issues of Spawn sold over a million copies each, and Cerebus was selling 16,000. Now Spawn is selling 170,000, and Cerebus is still selling 16,000. So it's like having one of the better deck chairs on the Titanic, or perhaps a preferred location in the middle of an ice floe that's melting around the edges," he adds wryly.

### Unique Collaboration

In 1984, another artist named Gerhard joined Sim to pencil and ink all of the backgrounds for Cerebus. "Gerhard's contribution can't be measured," says Sim. "It's so much a part of the look of the book, and the reputation that the book has for maintaining a level of quality. It's interesting to me

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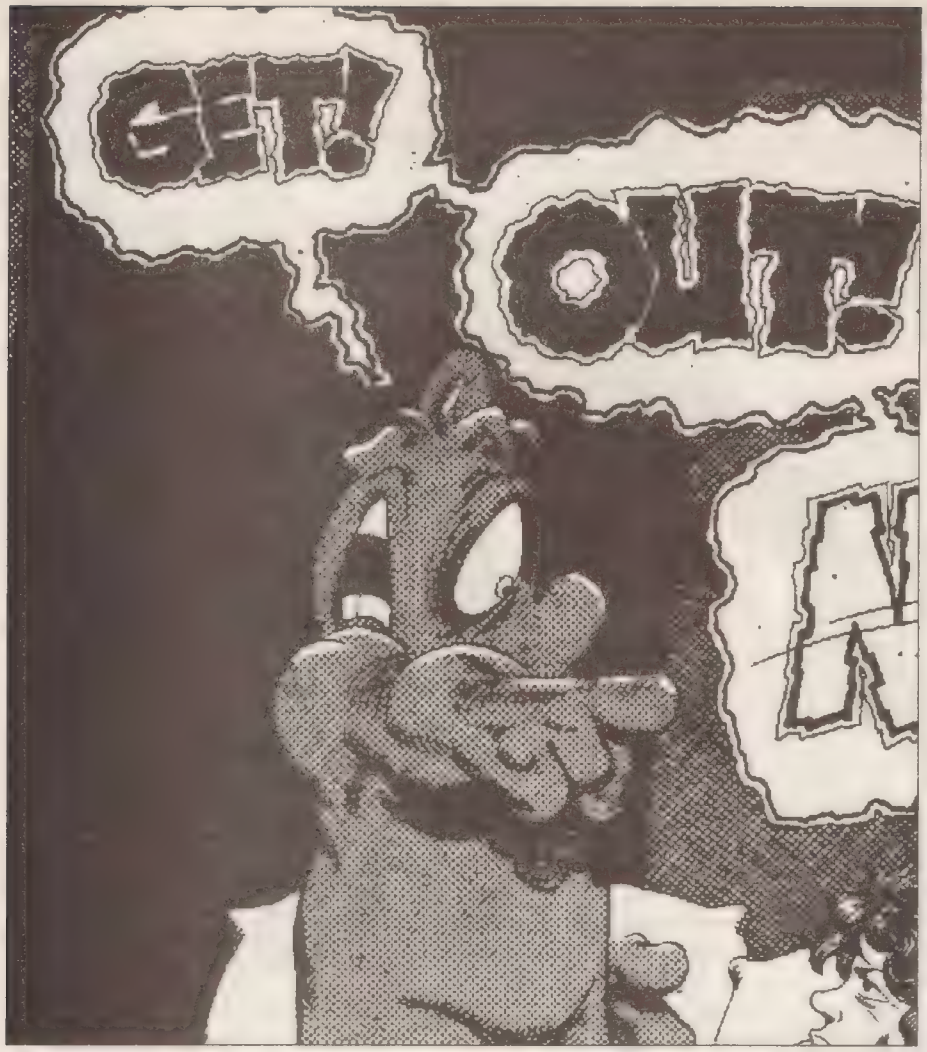



**Although Dave Sim's Cerebus has gone through many changes since it first appeared in 1977, the creator acknowledges the positive influence of Howard the Duck by Steve Gerber (published by Marvel Comics) at the time when Cerebus was just starting.**

that nobody else has tried this.

"It's still primarily a penciller and an inker, or one person doing the whole thing."

"It's a successful collaboration to me," Sim continues, "because we both have our jurisdictions, which I think is very important in any kind of creativity. In the situations where you have a penciller and an inker, you do tend to have one person initiating the work, and then the other person transforming it into something else. That tends to lead to friction of various kinds, and the urge to become an individual to take whatever reputation you get out of that and take it somewhere else, and try doing something completely on your own."

### Independent Thinking

Sim has written extensively about self-publishing and has offered invaluable advice to those seeking to follow in his footsteps. But his personal preference is to stress the individual as creator and self-publisher, and he urges cartoonists to make choices for themselves, rather than as part of a perceived emerging independent publishing trend or group.

"I think that as a civilization, we're sort of moving simultaneously in two directions—towards an overall collective where we're all of one flesh, while at the same time we're working on the most finely tuned individualizing process," comments Sim.

"It comes as a shock to a lot of people to recognize how extensively I've moved over to the individual side of things."

While the Spirits of Independence tour brought self-publishers together to benefit from an exchange of ideas and information, as well as to expose their work to the public, Sim says that he feels creators should still strive for individuality. "I'm sure there's a number of people who exhibited at the Spirits stops who thought, 'Oh, now I'm really part of something... I'm part of this self-publishing movement.' Which is, of course, their individual choice," Sim observes, adding, "I think people are happier in the long term by being individuals."

### Last Call, Another Round

As Canada's longest-running comic book, Cerebus has surpassed 200 issues and Dave Sim plans to continue it until #300. "I do try to make my efforts finite, whether it's the 26 years on Cerebus, or a year spent on Spirits stops, or the two years spent writing extensively about the comic book business and self-publishing's role in it," advises Sim. "I want very much to avoid the classic political situation of becoming so comfortable in a way of doing things that you stop examining whether it's a good idea or whether you've accomplished what you've set out to do, and now you're just continuing to do it because it's very easy continue doing it,"

I do try to make my efforts finite, whether it's the 26 years on Cerebus, or a year spent on Spirits stops . . .

he says.

Regular Cerebus readers know that both Sim and his creation have a legendary fondness for drink, so it's no surprise when Sim says of possible future plans.

"I've got lots of ideas. I've considered doing something like a 'Bar-Con'. I think that there's a specific atmosphere when everyone assembles in the bar and does jam stories and whatnot. And coupling that with an event where they can promote their work, and maybe make some money or get some advice, part of me is tempted to try a couple of them which are centred around the social activity."

Cerebus would approve.

☆

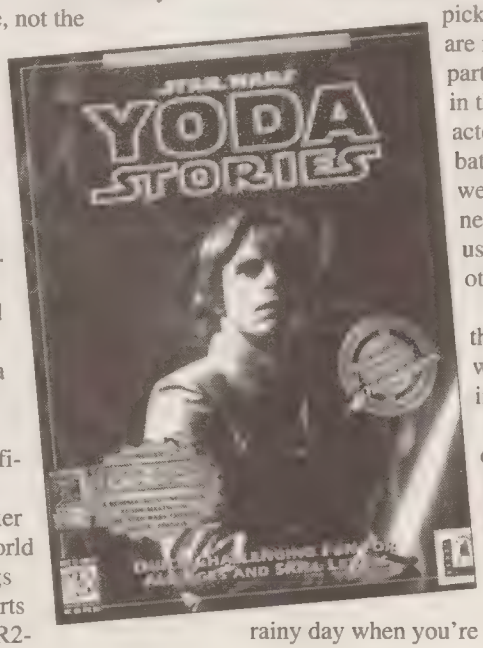
# Fluke, may the Force be with you

By
GREG VAILLANCOURT

Yoda Stories by LucasArts is a puzzle oriented game based in the Star Wars universe with unlimited replayability designed for play in one hour segments. What this game is good for is as a substitute to Freecell or Solitaire, as a primer for young kids just trying this as their first game, or as something to do while you're waiting for your Internet connection to finish walking through molasses and load the page you're at.

If you play it with this in mind, you will be fine. If on the other hand, you bought the game for $19.95 (suggested retail price) thinking it was a game similar in scope to Civilization 2, and that it was just old and in the discount section, then you will be sadly disappointed.

I bring this up because some reviewers, namely Robert Coffey (see Computer Gaming World July 1997 Issue No. 156 under the Adventure/RPG section) bash the game and give it a one out of five stars for the bad mouse control (try using the numeric keypad), short play time (it's a solitaire substitute, not the Encyclopedia Britannica) and cutesified characters' (it's a puzzle game, not a 3D action shooter). So if you were reading that review and were thinking how LucasArts, the makers of Maniac Mansion, Monkey Island 1 and 2, Dark Forces, Afterlife and many other high quality games, could put out something so bad as to get one out five stars, think again.




This game is great for what it was meant for, and has unlimited replay value — not bad for $20.

As for the gameplay itself, you play from a top-down perspective as Luke Skywalker, the prototypical young hero. The game environment can be modified (world size, combat difficulty, and game speed can all be changed) so you can make the game longer or shorter, easier or tougher, faster or slower. You travel the world map by trying to solve a puzzle, moving things to reveal hidden parts or areas, exchanging parts with familiar Star Wars characters and using R2-D2 as your help feature.

You will receive your quests from Yoda somewhere in the Dagobah forest and at some point in every quest, you will find Ben who will give you the power of the force, if you are healthy enough to handle it. This comes in really handy for reaching distant objects, turning on or off distant switches and persuading people and creatures to do as you wish. Along the way to solving certain puzzle parts, you will hear the Star Wars theme when you have solved areas critical to the completion of the overall puzzle and the success of the mission.

You can control your character by using the mouse (not recommended) or by using the numeric keypad (turn off the Num Lock key first) using the numbers for direction movement. To pick things up, move next to them until they are flashing and then press the Enter key. To partake in combat, left-click on the lightsabre in the inventory, then left-click on your character; Luke, (readying the lightsabre for combat) then just press the Space Bar to use your weapon. To move objects around, move next to them, hold down the Shift key and use the numeric keys to direct the objects to other locations.

Each puzzle should take you no more than one hour (even on a large world), works great over a lunch hour at work indoors!

As an added bonus, there is a multimedia film also included on the CD. This bonus gives you the entire spectrum of clips, comments and ideas about the remaking of Star Wars.

The entire package is quite good and you'll find there's nothing better on a rainy day when you're on your lunch break.

***Yoda Stories requires the following to operate: IBM and 100 per cent compatibles, Windows 95, 486/66 or higher CPU, 8MB RAM minimum, 256-Colour VLB or PCI VESA compatible video card, Microsoft 100 per cent compatible mouse, Double-speed CD-ROM (MPC Level 2) and 100 per cent Windows 95 sound card.***

# Holidays over!

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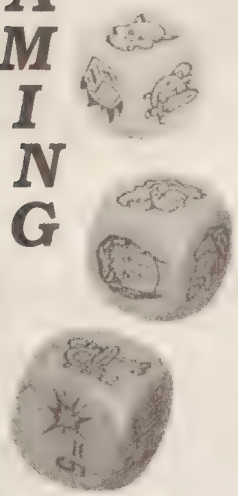
# Games' Canadian content suspect

GAMING NOTES



By
JUSTIN MOHAREB

It's tough being a Canadian gamer. I mean, first of all, we have to pay more for our stuff than Americans do. Sometimes a lot more. We get games later than they do, if at all (customs is a bitch). The worst part, that has nothing to do with economics and inconvenience and EVERYTHING to do with our national pride is that we get the shaft in every game world existing.

Canada gets no respect in gaming. Most modern games completely ignore the Great White North. Even though two of the best writers in gaming have been from here (David Pulver and the late Nigel Findley, each of whom have a massive body of work to their credit), and there are two serious Canadian game companies (Toronto's Deadalus Games, and Montreal's Dream Pod Nine), we're still just a blip compared to our neighbors to the south.

It's not as if Canada isn't an interesting place in which to adventure. I mean, we're a HUGE country. That's GOT to be worth something. We've got every sort of terrain (possibly barring desert; and we've got Tundra for that. Tundra beats desert any day!), from the deepest, darkest forests to sprawling Urban centres (been to Toronto lately?

It's kinda big). We've got history, and geography. We have economic giants here, and scientific breakthroughs. We have opportunities for political upheaval aplenty. So why are we seen as slightly less interesting to adventure in than Antarctica?

Even when we do get in, it's not as good as we would like. Champions of the North was one of my least favourite Champions accessories (downright horrible when compared to its bigger brother, Kingdom of Champions, which sent hordes of spandex-clad heroes to visit Jolly Olde England), from its cheesy watercoloured cover to the less than sterling depiction of Canada within. Our country's national hero team consisted of a squad of beginning level characters, who would likely have fallen over at the appearance of any of the major villains of the Champions Universe. Much less defeat the evil Superteam Eurostar.

Champions of the North was one of my least favourite Champions accessories (downright horrible when compared to its bigger brother, Kingdom of Champions, which sent hordes of spandex-clad heroes to visit Jolly Olde England) . . .

And the most powerful character in Canada is Borealis, a supervillain who would be a hero, if he were an American.

A World of Darkness, the worldbook for Vampire: The Masquerade, ignored Canada entirely.

The Second Edition, at least, featured a small section on Canada in its second edition. It wasn't too bad, giving Kingston a bit of a look over, and described the national setup in the WoD. Would have been better if it hadn't listed Alberta as a prairie city. An earlier adventure for Werewolf, Rite of Passage, is an all time favourite among Canadian gamers.

It listed a small town located "in mountainous northern Saskatchewan, 150 miles from Toronto."

Good Lord. I can see so many things wrong with that description.

The biggest exposure Canada has gotten was also from White Wolf.

Montreal By Night detailed the organization of the second largest city in Canada in the World of Darkness. Luckily for us, it seems the two biggest cities in Canada are controlled by a sect of evil vampires who view humanity as cattle (as opposed to normal vampires, who view people as people, but drink their blood anyway). Montreal by Night, released as part of White Wolf's Black Dog line, was for adults only.

This was mainly a case of the art (one scene makes me shudder everytime I'm in a public washroom, and the rest of the book has a very high nipple count), although some of the written content was disturbing in its own right. Of course, the book tended to be slightly off kilter with the real world (moreso than is normal for a dark milieu such as Vampire). One can't really see Mount Royal being haunted by ancient evils (although, that WOULD explain some things about Quebec), or even that many vampires living in a city that was, 40 years ago, practically run by the Catholic church.

TORG, which detailed an Earth invad-

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# Who's Who

**A. Jaye Williams** was born in Edmonton, Alta, in 1967. Most of his life has been spent in London, Ont. He attended Central Secondary High School and later Fanshawe College and the University of Western Ontario, in which he graduated with a B.A. in English. Currently, he is pursuing a life as a freelance writer. He also has a certificate in fitness and nutrition, and has spent many years learning about living a healthy and fit lifestyle. His first sale was an article to MuscleMag International, which addressed the benefits of weight training for those who suffer from Ulcerative Colitis.

**Melissa J. Yuan**, born and raised in Ottawa, is now a medical student in London, Ont. She struggles to balance writing with cadavers, books and live people. The Sacrifice was her first professional sale.

**Janet L. Hetherington** is a freelance writer/artist who has self-published a comic book, Eternal Romance

**Gregg Chamberlain** is a journalist based in Revelstoke, B.C. His articles and book reviews have appeared in a number of issues of Parsec. He serves as Parsec's West Coast correspondent.

# DESOUSA

ed by extradimensional armies, had a brief section on Canada in its first worldbook. It described how the Canadian government moved to Regina after the primeval Living Land landed too close to Ottawa (shocking; an American who knows where our capital is?). It was fairly good in its views of the nation. It was pretty short, but it DID have a Mountie character template. Later on in the conflict, we were invaded AGAIN, this time by the cybernetic francophone inquisitors of the Cyberpapacy. They landed in Quebec, oddly enough.

Some of the best press came from the now departed Games Designers Workshop. Their Twilight 2000 game gave notice to Canadian forces stationed in Europe after World War III, and Space 1889 gave a write-up of the Canadian military in that space-faring Victorian setting (including the all female Company A, 62nd St. John Fusiliers of New Brunswick). Canada was a major space power in their Traveller: 2300 (aka 2300 AD), controlling a finger of space just near China's space.

An annoyingly large number of near future games view us as "the country Quebec separated from," which, I am sure, makes all of you feel as fuzzy as I do. At least Shadowrun made the North American union the United Canadian and American States (UCAS), even if there has been next to no mention of it in any S-Run supplements.

Luckily, gamers can run their own game worlds as they see fit; one GM I knew named all his new ships in his Star Trek game after famous Canadians. Another ran a Golden Age Champions game that detailed the adventures of the Bytown Brigade, battling the forces of Nazi Oppression across the Dominion of Canada (and Newfoundland). Others have sent Call of Cthulu investigators to face fierce Wendigo in the frozen North, or deep ones off the Grand Banks.

Of course, there's bound to come a day when Canada will get her due on the gaming stage. White Wolf is going to do a Canada sourcebook for their Wild West version of Werewolf. Rumors have spread (like fungus) of a GURPS Canada book. Maybe someday, there'll be enough Canadians in gaming (on both sides of the cash register) to make a good SB on Canada a viable possibility.

Until then, we'll probably have to be happy with close but no cigar descriptions of the country, and character templates like Pinnacle's Deadlands mountie, whose quote includes the line "come oot of the shed!" Who really talks like that, eh?

☆

**Oct. 3-5**

**Contradiction Seventeen:** Days Inn Fallsview, Niagara Falls, N.Y. Scheduled guests: Pamela Sargent, Anne R. Bishop, Carolyn Clink , James Alan Gardner. Registration: $25 until Sept. 23, $30 at door. Information: SASE to P.O. Box 100, Bridge Station, Niagara Falls, N.Y., 14305.

**Oct. 4**

**Falcon III:** Lord Nelson Hotel, Halifax, N.S. Scheduled guests: Leslie Choyce, Kevin Loftus, Robert Lepine. Registration: $10 by Sept. 23, $12 at door. Information: P.O. Box 36123, Halifax, N.S. B3J 3S9, gtucker@fox.nstn.ns.ca or (902) 445-2281.

**Oct. 5**

**Men Behind the Masks**: Colony Hotel, Toronto, Ont. Scheduled guests: David Prowse, Jeremy Bullock. Registration: $20, reserved seating $30. Information: fax (416) 223-9446 or starcon@interlog.com

**Oct. 10**

**NonCon XX**: Sandman Inn, Lethbridge, AB. Scheduled guests: Spider and Jeanne Robinson. Registration: N/A. Information: 325-Leaside Ave. S., Lethbridge, AB., T1J 4G8 or cdyck@jrcc.com.

**Oct. 18-19**

**ConQuest**: Winnipeg Convention Centre, Winnipeg, MB. Scheduled guests: Forrest J.Ackerman, Chris Rutkowski. Registration: N/A. Information: 87A Arlington Ave., Winnipeg, MB., R3C 1Y3 or acn160@freenet.mb.ca.

**Oct. 31 -Nov. 2**

**Concinnity 97**: Super 8 Hotel, 480 Metcalfe, Ottawa, Ont. Scheduled guests: N/A. Registration: $25 until Sept. 30, $30 at door. Information: 26076, 73 Robertson Rd., Nepean, Ont., K2H 5Y8.

**Primedia/Canvention 17:** Holiday Inn, Markham, Ont. *Featuring the Aurora Awards.* Scheduled guests: Robert J. Sawyer, Megan Gallagher, Nigel Bennett, Rob Wilson. Registration: $25 until Sept. 25 and $35 at door. Information: 1403-33 King St. W., Weston, Ont., M9N 3R7.

**June 5-7, 1998**

**Ad Astra XVIII:** Radisson Hotel, Toronto East Don Valley. Scheduled guests: N/A. Registration: $30 prior to Dec. 31, $35 prior to May 15, $40 at the door. Information: P.O. Box 7276, Station A, Toronto, Ont. M5W 1X9.

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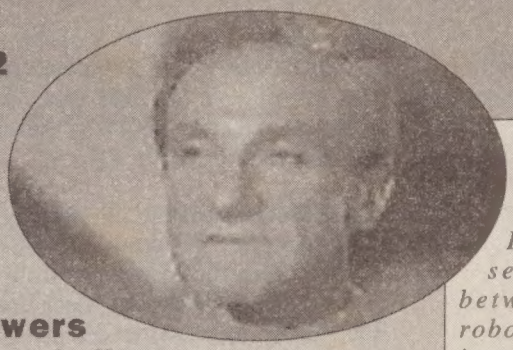

**Erik J. Foisey of Ottawa is the winner of our Prisoner Brain Teaser with 12 correct answers.**

1) What was the year the Jupiter 2 was launched?

2) What was the Jupiter 2's original destination?

3) What was the name of the facility where it was launched from?

4) Michael Rennie (from The Day the Earth Stood Still) portrayed an alien in charge of a menagerie, what was his title on the episode? *(hint: The . . .)*

5) Creator Irwin Allen used some of the monsters that appeared in Lost In Space in another of his programs that was airing at the same time. Name the second program.

6) What was the name of the vehicle the Robinson's used when they were on the planet?

7) In the episode, Attack of the Vegetable People, what vegetable was the race's leader?

8) Will Robinson once named the planet he and his family were marooned on. What is it?

9) What was the original title for Lost in Space?

10) What book provided the inspiration for the program?

**Answers to last issue's Prisoner Brain Teaser: 1) 17; (2) a Lotus Seven; (3) #2; (4) Why he retired; (5) Patrick McGoohan; (6) Rover; (7) The dwarfish butler; (8) Portmeriron; (9) 1 Buckingham Place; (10) "...makes a happylife"; (11) a weather ballon; (12) a white Beetle; (13) the Green Dome; (14) Who is Number 1; (15) "I'm not a number! I'm a free man!"**

# INSULTS

*Part of the charm of the series was the interplay between Dr. Smith and the robot. of course, part of that interplay were the insults Smith hurled at the robot: Here are a few:*

- ❑ Adlepated Amateur;
- ❑ Adlepated Armor Bearer;
- ❑ Automated Oaf;
- ❑ Babbling Birdbrain;
- ❑ Babbling Bumpkin;
- ❑ Bellicose Bumpkin;
- ❑ Bubble-Headed Booby;
- ❑ Cackling Cacophony;
- ❑ Cackling Cookoo;
- ❑ Clod-Like Collection of Condensors;
- ❑ Cybernetic Simpleton;
- ❑ Deplorable Dunderhead;
- ❑ Digitized Dunce;
- ❑ Ferrous Frankenstein;
- ❑ Fugitive From a Junkheap;
- ❑ Fugitive From a Junkyard;
- ❑ Fugitive From a Scrap Heap;
- ❑ Gallumphing Gargoyle;
- ❑ Hard-Headed Harbinger of Evil;
- ❑ Mass of Mechanical Ignorance;
- ❑ Ingot of Ingratitude;
- ❑ Iron-Borne Ingrate;
- ❑ Jabbering Jackanape;
- ❑ Know Nothing Numskull;
- ❑ Lamebrained Lump;
- ❑ Lead-lined Lothario;
- ❑ Mealy-mouthed Rogue;
- ❑ Meandering Mental Midget;
- ❑ Metallurgical Friend;
- ❑ Nattering Ninny;
- ❑ Neanderthal Ninny;
- ❑ Overcautious Concoction;
- ❑ Parsimonious Puppet;
- ❑ Pot Headed Prankster;
- ❑ Pot-Bellied Pumpkin;
- ❑ Pusillanimous Pip-squeak;
- ❑ Quivering Quintessence of Fear;
- ❑ Ramshackled Romeo;
- ❑ Terrified Mechanical Dunderhead

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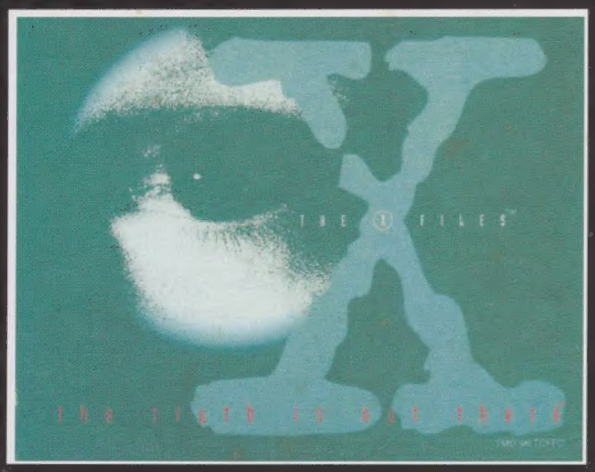


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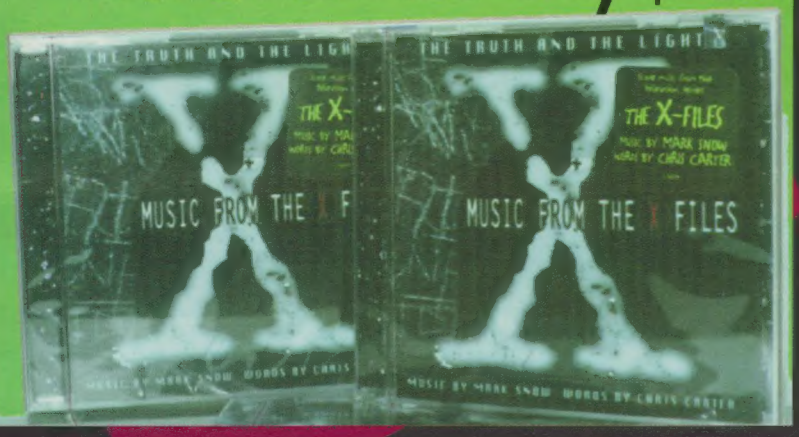


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